**Black Parents' Critical Consciousness:**
**Conceptualization, Measurement, and Links to Parent School Engagement**

by

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**Dedication**

To Liliane, Michaëlle, Melissa, and Zara. Four generations of women who have taught me so much.

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## Abstract

Parent involvement in schools has been identified as an important contributor to children's academic success. However due to deficit-based views that educators can hold, Black parents are often labeled as disinterested or not invested in their children's education. Beyond deficit-based attitudes, relationships between Black parents and schools are influenced by structural racism that reproduces and maintains historically-rooted systemic racial power dynamics (Salter & Haugen, 2017).

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how Black parents' beliefs about educational inequities impact the way they choose to engage with their children's schools. Using critical race theory (CRT) to highlight the ways in which structural racism impacts Black parent participation and the conceptual framework of critical consciousness (CC), I argue that parents' analysis of inequities present within schools influences the reasons and ways in which they engage with their children's schools. When taken together, parents' critical analyses of racism within schools creates particular forms of parent participation, which I label *critical parent school engagement*, that accounts for parents' intentions for their involvement with a consideration of their understanding of racial inequities.

This dissertation consists of three stand-alone manuscripts that together: 1) propose a new theoretical integration, 2) explore that proposed integration through interviews with Black parents, and 3) develop a measure to quantitatively explore Black parent CC in regard to their engagement with their children's schools. Chapter two proposes a theoretical foundation for the conceptualization of CC for Black parents by integrating CRT and current understanding of CC.

To explore Black parents' awareness and analysis of systemic inequities inherent in schools and how that may influence the ways in which they interact with these institutions, qualitative interviews were conducted and described in chapter three. Results suggest that parents largely hold both types of beliefs—critical and traditional—and engage in both types of actions and that the relationship between beliefs and action are nuanced.

Using data from these interviews chapter four outlines the development and validation of a measure of Black parent CC. Through the process of factor analysis five internally consistent factors were found and the resulting model was a good fit of the data (RMSEA = .05, CFI = .93, TLI = .92, and SRMR = .07) . Those five factors include: 1) structural attributions, or parents' perceptions that inequities are caused by systemic factors, institutional racism, etc., 2) group participation, or parents' participation in formal and informal groups for the benefit of their children's education, 3) internal efficacy, or parents' belief about their ability to make change, 4) individual attributions, or parents' belief that educational inequities are caused by individual factors, and 5) school-based engagement, or the actions that parents engage in at the school site. This scale has the potential to shed light on parents' understanding of social structures, inequities present within them, and how that might be related to the academic messages they send to their children and subsequent engagement with their children's school. Elucidating the ways that Black parents critically view the racially oppressive nature of public schools and how they subsequently engage advances current scholarship on parent engagement that is devoid of considerations of race and racism.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how Black parents' beliefs about educational inequities impact the ways they choose to engage with their children's schools. I use critical consciousness (CC) and critical race theory (CRT) to explain the contextual, historical, and psychological factors that may interact and inform the way parents' view schools and interact on behalf of their children's education. CRT is a theoretical framework that explicates how racism is deeply embedded in society and maintains historic patterns of racial hierarchies while CC provides a framework to examine the behaviors, motivations, and actions that Black parents engage in. Using both quantitative and qualitive methodologies, I explore how Black parents' critical analysis is associated with their actions to benefit the academic success of their children and other children within their community.

### Statement of the Problem

Decades of research have identified parent engagement as an important determinant of children's educational success (Epstein, 1984, 1987; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Jeynes, 2005). Whether or not Black parents are present at the school, educators often hold deficit-based ideologies about them (Epstein, 2001; Noguera, 2001). Conclusions are often incorrectly made by teachers and school personnel about Black parents. These incorrect conclusions are framed from a deficit perspective making Black parents seem disinterested or not invested in their child's education when they are not present at the school site. Conversely, when Black parents are involved, schools often do not welcome, cultivate, or share power with these parents (Cooper, 2007; Noguera, 2001). For example, Cooper (2007) recounts a story of a school

superintendent who voiced a concern about "'angry' Black mothers who 'hassle' his principals" (pg. 491). Black parents are more likely to be perceived negatively than parents from other ethnic groups when interacting with schools (Chapman & Bhopal, 2013; Hill, 2015). These biased and stereotyped views and actions may discourage parents from engaging.This dissertation seeks to exemplify the many ways Black parents are invested in their children's education even when facing a space that maintains deeply rooted racial power asymmetries.

To understand the ways in which race and racism are prevalent within the educational system and influence the ways that Black parents perceive schools and how schools perceive Black parents, CRT will be applied in conjunction with CC. CRT posits that race and racism are omnipresent and endemic in American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Within schools, racist policies and practices create differential school experiences for Black students. In addition to the racist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of biased individuals, institutional racism is entrenched in the school context, and policies and practices reproduce and maintain historically rooted systemic racial power dynamics (Salter & Haugen, 2017). These policies and practices include differential student tracking, inequitable school funding, school resegregation, higher rates of school dropout, and disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion all of which put African American students at a disadvantage (Chapman, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Parents who are more socially critical may attribute these inequities and biases to systemic and structural problems rather than individual groups' failures.

CC can be used as a framework to better understand how parents make sense of the way race may influence their children's experiences in school and is commonly comprised of three components: critical reflection, critical motivation, and critical action (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2001). Critical reflection refers to the analysis and refection of social inequities that limit human

agency that are racialized, gendered, or class-based in nature. Critical motivation refers to an individuals' perception that they can produce social change (Diemer, Hawley, McWhirter, Ozer, & Rapa, 2015). Finally, critical action is defined as the action that is taken either individually or collectively to enact positive change in society. Parents' recognition of the roles that power and dominance play in creating and maintaining systematic disparities between groups in conjunction with the judgments about the injustice of such an arrangement—their critical reflection—may serve as the impetus that compels them to engage or disengage with schools.

The main aim of this dissertation is to explore the ways that Black parents critically analyze societal and educational inequities in order to further explore how they then engage with their children's schools. It contributes to the literature by examining various factors associated with the ways in which Black parents make sense of inequity in addition to their parental engagement behaviors. This dissertation will begin with a theoretical integration of CC and CRT as frameworks that can be adapted by scholars and educators to better understand factors that influence Black parents' engagement. Next a qualitative inquiry and scale development contribute empirical evidence of the relationship between Black parents' beliefs and actions. These studies are explained in further detail below.

*Chapter 1: Theoretical Integration*

The first chapter of this dissertation reviews and integrates CRT and CC theory. The first section of this chapter explains how linking CRT and CC—two conceptual frameworks that share goals of critiquing oppression in the aim of liberation—complement one another in order to explore Black parents' efforts to ensure fair treatment and academic success of their children within schools. Drawing on work from scholars who have applied CRT to education broadly (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and Black parents more specifically (Reynolds, 2010), the next

section of this chapter, explains how race and racism influence Black students' experiences and Black parents' involvement in the school. Next, I outline how current conceptualizations of parent involvement often do not include an examination of the historical context, the existence of structural racism, and barriers that Black families face when delineating the factors that influence how Black parents are involved in school. The ways in which components of CC can be adapted for Black parents are discussed in subsequent sections. Next, a new conceptualization of Black parent involvement is advanced. *Critical parent engagement* is proposed as a way of including Black parents' awareness and understanding of how race and racism impact their experiences in schools, while recognizing parents' actions to advocate for their children. The chapter ends with a discussion of future directions and ways that this new conceptualization can be used in practice.

*Chapter 2: Qualitative Study*

The first empirical study—Chapter 2—explores the role Black parents believe they should play in their children's education. Although Black parents are often viewed as less involved and interested in their children's education in comparison to other parents, I argue that Black parents are not uninvolved and uninterested, but rather that they engage with schools in ways that are less recognizable to schools due to the narrow scope of what schools consider acceptable parent involvement. In addition, parents views about racial inequity are explored as a potential component that shapes their behavior. Black parents may have different perspectives of their role and the school's role in educating their children. Using qualitative interviews, this chapter examines the extent to which parents' previous experiences with school and their analysis of inequities within society and schools influence the way they conceptualize their role and the subsequent actions they engage in.

The main questions explored are:

1. How do Black parents recognize systemic educational inequities?
2. How do Black parents describe their motivations for interacting with their children's schools?
3. How do Black parents describe their school engagement?
4. How does their critical analysis of educational inequities influence their engagement?

*Chapter 3: Measure Development & Validation*

The second empirical paper explains the need and benefit of having a measure of Black parents' CC. Chapter 3 outlines the construction of a measure that captures how parents' critical understanding of the school system, their motivations to engage, and the ways in which they interact with their children's schools. I use structural equation modeling (SEM) to conduct exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses—an essential tool when developing a scale—to arrive at a final set of items. The original set of 59 items were tested and validated with two independent samples of Black parents in order to construct and validate the measure which showed evidence of being valid, reliable, and internally consistent. Suggestions on how to apply this measure to practice is discussed as well as future directions of how this measure can be used in subsequent research.

The conclusion chapter synthesizes the three preceding chapters and makes connections between the proposed theory and the empirical findings from Chapters 2 and 3. Additionally, future directions and implications are discussed while considering limitations of the current work. The main goal of the dissertation as a whole is to contribute to the strengths-based view of Black parents and further understand the precursors to their involvement and actions they engage

in that serve to support their children's academic outcomes and experiences in the midst of a school structure that does not always have their or their children's best interest in mind.

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## Chapter 2: Integrating Race, Racism, and Critical Consciousness in Black Parents' Engagement with Schools

Schools often use traditional definitions of parent involvement, leading them to deem Black parents as uninvolved, overlooking the multiple ways in which these parents *do* participate in their children's education (Cooper, 2009; Fine, 1993; Reynolds, 2015; Wilson, 2019). Parent behaviors that constitute traditional parent school involvement include attendance at parent-teacher conferences, volunteering in the classroom, and joining the parent teacher association (Epstein, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Scholars have recognized that these behaviors are more easily performed by white middle to upper class parents, due to greater flexibility in their schedules, availability of capital, and power structures present within schools that systematically marginalize parents of color (Olivos, 2006; Reynolds, 2015; Wilson, 2019). In this paper, I will problematize the forms of involvement that schools privilege by explaining how race and racism influence both schools' perceptions of Black parent involvement and Black parents' perceptions of schools—using critical race theory (CRT). Additionally, I use the critical consciousness (CC) paradigm to illustrate how Black parents' beliefs and motivations shape the ways they choose to engage with their children's schools.

Schools are contexts that are structured around unspoken rules and norms for involvement. Delpit (1988) asserts that these norms and subsequently assigned roles generally create a "culture of power" that negatively affects those with less power—usually people of color and those experiencing poverty. This imposition creates an ideal held by many educators of what an "involved parent" looks like. School faculty and staff sometimes fail to fully understand the

role that race plays on their perceptions of Black parents and how race and class systemically and systematically constrain Black parents' involvement within schools (Howard & Reynolds 2008). There is a large body of work that offers examples of how parents of color do in fact act as agents of change and advocate on behalf of their children's education (Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004; Cooper, 2009; Cooper & McCoy, 2009; Wilson, 2019). For instance, Cooper (2009) describes the strong legacy of Black parents' educational involvement and the ways they have historically advocated on behalf of their children, other families, and the community as a whole in the form of engaging in protests against school boards, participating in school councils, and organizing parent spaces to improve educational resources and standards. However, schools may not value or view these moments of advocacy as parent involvement—instead mislabeling these behaviors as angry, aggressive, and agitative (Cooper, 2009; Reynolds 2010). These deficit views about parents of color can result in discriminatory treatment in the schools, wherein some educators do not expect, welcome, or cultivate parent relationships (Cooper, 2007; 2009; Fine, 1993; Reynolds, 2009; 2010; 2015; Wilson, 2019).

This paper centers Black parents because they, their children, and their families in general have experienced educational exclusion, disenfranchisement, and faced educational inequities for decades within the United States (Chapman, 2013; Cooper; 2007; Howard & Reynolds, 2008). At the same time, I also recognize that there is variation among Black families in terms of socioeconomic factors, contexts, beliefs, and experiences; they do not constitute one monolithic group. However, even amidst this variation, Black people within the United States are all affected by structural racism—or patterns of action where societal institutions create more burdens and give fewer benefits for one race on an on-going basis (Golash-Boza, 2016). I delineate how race and racism mediate Black parents' interactions with schools by drawing on

work from scholars who have applied CRT to education broadly (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and Black parents more specifically (Reynolds, 2010; Wilson, 2019). Further, using the conceptual framework of CC, I argue that parents' analysis of inequities present within schools influences the reasons and ways in which they engage with their children's schools. When taken together, parents' critical analyses of racism within schools creates particular forms of parent participation, which I label *critical parent school engagement*, that accounts for parents' intentions for their involvement with a consideration of their understanding of racial inequities. Considering CRT to contextually and historically understand Black parent participation and CC to examine the individual psychological processes that parents experience, these two theories will further extend literature that frames the developmental processes of Black parent advocacy within schools.

**Critical Paradigm**

The critical paradigm offers a broad epistemological category that encompasses many research positions within it, such as feminist theory, postmodernism, poststructuralism, and CRT (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Critical theories assume that we live in a world mediated by entrenched power dynamics and a firmly fixed power hierarchy. These theories acknowledge dominant ideologies and oppressive structures of power. Further, critical theory identifies the ways in which economic, political, gender, ethnic, and racial material conditions influence peoples' beliefs, behavior, and experiences (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Both CRT and CC bring attention to oppressive systems and structures. CRT explicitly names hierarchical racial structures in society and asserts that race and racism are historically and socially constructed and have been normalized within our society (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2005). Although CRT foregrounds race and racism, the theory also recognizes the

myriad ways racism interacts with other oppressive forces in society such as patriarchy, classism, sexism, and homophobia. CRT in education allows us to work towards redressing racial inequity and create meaningful outcomes for youth in schools (Dixson & Anderson, 2018).

CC stems from the concept of *conscientização,* which refers to the process of learning the contradictions present in the social, political, and economic realms in order to act against the oppressive elements inherent in these domains (Freire, 1970). According to CC, in order to overcome oppression, one must think deeply and seriously about the causes of such oppression. CC as a critical frame, describes how individuals think about oppressive structures, how efficacious they feel in making change, and what behaviors they engage in to make such change. Linking these two conceptual frameworks that share roots in critiquing oppression and goals for liberation provides an opportunity to analyze historical and contemporary societal structures, along with the beliefs and actions individuals take to address inequities within those structures from differing disciplinary standpoints. For instance, linking CRT's permanence of racism notion, which states that racism is omnipresent in society (Decuir & Dixson,2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) offers a sociological understanding of race and racism, with dimensions of CC such as critical reflection of perceived inequities, political efficacy, and critical action (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011) offers s a psychological perspective and together allows for a way to understand how racism influences the educational system and subsequent parent behaviors. This conceptual pairing extends research that critically explores Black parents' involvement but stops short of explaining how Black parents' analyses of race and racism shapes their actions and efforts to ensure fair treatment and academic success of their children within schools.

**Race and Education: Critical Race Theory and Contextual Considerations**

Public-school proponent and educational pioneer, Horace Mann, famously posited that education is a great equalizer of the conditions of men. Unfortunately, his belief has not been realized. Theorists have described ways that the education system reproduces social stratification and inequalities rather than truly providing all students with equal chances to succeed (Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Oakes, 1985). For example, within the last 60 years, achievement gaps by class, by race, and in certain subjects by gender have been well documented (Kozol, 1991; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Morris & Perry, 2016). Further, racialized student tracking, inequitable school funding, school re-segregation, higher dropout rates, and disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion, all put minoritized students at a collective disadvantage (Chapman, 2013; Shollenberger, 2015). These inequities represent the deep disparities that shape the experiences of Black students within schools. The realities of race and racism within schools persistently undermine the widely held ideal that Mann proposed in the 19th century; public schools are not equalizers of opportunity.

Educational research has largely avoided using racism to explain discrepancies in student outcomes, choosing to focus instead on seemingly race-neutral class and gender analyses (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solorzano, 1997). To better understand how racism is entrenched within the educational system, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) apply CRT—born out of critical legal studies—to educational settings. CRT is founded on the ontological belief that race is nearly inextricably embedded in every aspect of American society, including hierarchical systems and structures that govern educational, economic, social, and political domains (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Omi & Winant, 1994). CRT is used to theorize about, examine, and challenge the way that race and racism both implicitly and explicitly influence social structures, policies, and practices (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Yosso, 2005). This assertion is often argued within

several elements of the theory which inform its basic perspectives, ideologies, and insights. The first element, permanence of racism, asserts that race and racism are central, permanent, and fundamental in understanding the way that US society is defined and functions. The second element, critique of liberalism, challenges white supremacy and dominant ideology by refuting ideals such as objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. CRT is also committed to social justice in that it aims to eliminate oppression based on race, gender, and class for people of color. Fourth, the theory privileges the lived experiences and experiential knowledge of people of color through counterstorytelling and counternarratives as legitimate, valid, and necessary to understand race as an oppressive structure. Finally, CRT engages an interdisciplinary approach. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) assert that to better understand the effects of different systems of oppression CRT in education must use the knowledge base and perspectives of other disciplines.

CRT highlights the limitations of class-based narratives that are prevalent in the way parent involvement in schools is viewed. Howard and Reynolds (2008) found that when class is held constant, race is still a salient factor in shaping Black families' experiences in schools. For instance, African American students who attend more affluent schools perform poorer than their White peers within the same school, pointing to race as an important factor to consider in student achievement with schools (Carter, 2005; Jenks & Phillips, 1998). Reynolds' research examines Black middle-class parents and has consistently found race and racism to be strong mediators within relationships between participants and schools. Black middle-class parents report microaggressions steeped in racial bias (Pierce, 1974; Solórzano, 1998) and describe the need to negotiate a dual existence, a double consciousness (Du Bois, 1903) in which they intentionally

attempt to appear credible, respectable, to be deemed worthy enough by school officials to be valuable partners for the educational well-being of their children.

When race is included in empirical analyses it is usually viewed one of two ways—either as a variable to be included in a study or as a cultural influence (O'Connor, Lewis, & Mueller, 2007). Viewing race solely as a variable without considering how racism is inextricably intertwined can lead to inaccurate conclusions across groups. For instance, research may find that Black students are underperforming on standardized tests, without consideration of race and racism as possible causes of underperformance (e.g., bias in standardized tests, stereotype threat; see Helms, 1992). A reliance on race-comparative frameworks, can lead to detrimental conclusions that Black students are intellectually inferior. Such analyses fail to interrogate the contexts and environments these conditions are found in and fall short in considering systemic oppression, neglect, and discriminatory policies and practices that affect students of color. CRT takes up where these decontextualized analyses fall short by centering race and racism in considering all institutional conditions and outcomes.

In this paper, I discuss negative experiences and outcomes that Black parents and students continue to have within schools that institutionally and systematically reify and reproduce racism. Exclusionary and discriminatory practices continue to marginalize Black families from the educational process. For instance, Decuir and Dixson (2004) explain whiteness as property by referring to Harris (1993), a legal CRT scholar, who argues that whiteness becomes a form of property to attain that has both social and material value including privilege, access, and status (Dixson & Anderson, 2018). These rights affiliated with property are conferred to individuals and create a group that is then either validated or legitimized within society and creates a privileged group that has the ability to access high quality education and gain more

access to resources thus perpetuating the exclusion that Black parents have experienced. Even the most well-intentioned schools and teachers are affected by historically and contemporarily racist ideas and beliefs about Black students and their families (Milner, 2011) and educators' deficit views can keep schools from being "the great equalizer" they were once hoped to be. In the following section I outline CC which serves as the psychological component of this theoretical integration and explains how parents make sense of structural racism within schools, how that may affect their perceptions of their ability to make change, and their subsequent actions within the schools.

**Critical Consciousness**

Critical consciousness, or *conscientização*, is a construct discussed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire in the early 1970s as he worked with Brazilian peasants. His notion of CC describes how oppressed and marginalized individuals become aware of the social conditions around them and how they work to rectify them. He focused on literacy as a way for individuals to "read the word" so that they could "read the world" and act to create positive change. This process has been viewed as ongoing and has been viewed as an "antidote for" or way to break through the stifling effects of oppression in pursuit of liberation (Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999).

Critiquing schools for not being great equalizers represents a preliminary form of critical social analysis, one of three main components theorized in modern CC. Critical social analysis (also referred to as critical reflection) refers to the analysis and rejection of various forms of inequity—whether racial, gendered, or class-based—that limit well-being and human agency. On a continuum, with one end being attributing educational issues to oppressive structural forces and the other end to individual differences, individuals who are more critically reflective view social inequity as more systemic. For example, people who believe that racial inequities in education

are caused more by social structures (e.g., inequitable school funding, biased standardized tests) than individual factors (e.g., lack of effort by students of color) may be described as engaging in a critical social analysis or having a "critical stance" (Watts, Diemer, &Voight, 2011). By pairing critical reflection with the contextual and historical clarity around racism that CRT provides, the two can serve as factors that influence Black parents' subsequent actions.

In addition to critical reflection, CC is comprised of political efficacy and critical action (Diemer, Rapa, Park & Perry, 2017; Watts et al., 2011). Political efficacy refers to an individual's perceived ability or motivation to make change through either individual and/or collective action. Critical action is defined as individual or collective action taken to change aspects of society that are deemed inequitable (Diemer, McWhirter, Ozer, & Rapa, 2015; Watts et al., 2011). Elucidating how each of these dimensions of CC function for Black parents will allow for a more comprehensive picture of how parents' perceptions of society and their own ability interact and inform their interactions with their children's schools.

**Marginalizing Conceptualizations of Parent Involvement**

Decades of research has revealed that when parents are involved in their children's education, children experience improved academic achievement as evidenced by higher grades and test scores, better attendance, higher rates of homework completion, fewer placements in special education, more positive school attitudes and behavior, and higher graduation rates (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Jeynes, 2005; Robinson & Harris, 2014). The recognition of these positive outcomes has led the United States government to develop initiatives for states, districts, and schools to focus on prioritizing school-family partnerships and exploring ways for collaborative efforts. However, as Rogers

(2006) argues, these initiatives often fail because there is a fundamental lack of understanding of the problems that plague communities of color and those who are less affluent in this country.

This emphasis on parent involvement is now a prevalent norm within schools. Parents are expected to participate in everyday activities in schools (Fernández & López, 2017). Even still, no one definition fully encompasses the numerous forms of parent involvement though many definitions include both school-based and home-based behaviors. With school-based involvement, parents are present in the school building for events such as PTA meetings, open houses, and parent-teacher conferences. They serve on school governance bodies, volunteer in the school, or chaperone, and communicate with teachers or other school personnel. Home-based involvement includes parent-child communication about school, assistance with homework, taking children to events and spaces that foster academic success, relaying messages around the importance of academic success, or parents' efforts to create a learning environment within the home. Taking children to visit museums, libraries, and zoos are also considered home-based school involvement actions (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Although both forms of involvement represent actions parents take for the benefit of their children's education, home-based behaviors are less recognized as parent involvement by practitioners since those behaviors are occurring outside of the school building and are often unseen.

Another component to consider when thinking about reasons Black parents might be unseen within the school setting is their child's developmental period. For example, as children transition from elementary to secondary school, parental involvement at the school site declines. As adolescents develop and take a more active role in their education, they subsequently are more autonomous and desire to not have parents visit the school (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Stevenson

& Baker, 1987). In a meta-analysis of 50 empirical reports and articles, Hill and Tyson (2009) sought to synthesize the extent to which parental involvement was positively associated with academic outcomes, which types of parental involvement were most strongly related to positive academic outcomes, and to an exploratory extent examine differences between Black and white parents. They found that academic socialization, or parents' communication of their achievement expectations and value of education, had the strongest positive relationship with achievement at middle school over and above home-based and school-based involvement. This finding is not surprising. School-based involvement is most relevant for younger children when teachers expect that involvement and may contribute to why this type of involvement was not found to be the most important in the middle school years. This developmental trend may explain why parents are less visible to teachers and school administrators at the secondary level. Further, academic socialization messages transmitted by any parent to their child becomes an important parental involvement behavior at this time and remains unseen to teachers. Hill and Tyson (2009) explicate that academic socialization is a strategy that is dependent on parents' knowledge and resources as well as the schools' ability to provide those resources, which may difficult if there is a strained relationship between the school and the parent.

Although research has continuously found positive associations between parent involvement and student academic outcomes, it is important to recognize that parents have varying motivations for their engaging in these actions. Pomerantz and colleagues (2007) extend a framework that considers the how, why, and whom of parent involvement. They contend that how parents are involved in their children's' schooling contributes to the effectiveness of such involvement and that why parents get involved in the first place are important considerations. Further, in line with developmental models, Pomerantz and colleagues (2007) suggest that some

parental involvement behaviors may serve as an example for children about how to take control of an issue in order to create positive change. This parallels results from a qualitative study of Black parents that found that parents are highly involved in their children's education in middle school, but as their children entered high school, parents hoped that the early examples of their involvement would serve as a model for how their children can now advocate for themselves (Marchand, Settles, Diemer, & Rowley, in prep).

Even without a universal consensus, much of what has traditionally been deemed as effective or valued parent involvement reflects school-based involvement behaviors and reflects Epstein's *Six Types of Involvement* framework (Epstein, 2001). The six types of involvement listed within this framework include: 1) parenting (e.g., basic child-rearing) 2) communicating (e.g. communication between home and school), 3) volunteering, (e.g., having parents assist in school activities) 4) learning at home (e.g., parent assistance with schoolwork at home), 5) decision making, (e.g., including parents in school decisions) and 6) community collaborations (e.g., linking families to community resources and programs). These behaviors create a "laundry list" of sorts that defines what "good parents" should do. Essentially, Epstein calls for parents' deferential support of schools' agendas and discounts behaviors that parents engage in at home, and her lists neglect considerations of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status (Olivos, 2006). For example, behaviors such as volunteering at the school are more easily fulfilled by parents who do not work, who are supported by the income of a spouse, or those with professional occupations that allow flexible scheduling. Much of the research on parent involvement, as well as how schools define the concept privileges the more conservative and traditional, school-based definitions of what it means for a parent to be involved (Cooper, 2009; Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Lareau, 1989; Olivos, 2006; Wilson, 2019; Yull, Wilson, Murray & Parham, 2018). These

activities that are valued symbolize and promote white middle to upper class forms of involvement thereby excluding alternate forms of involvement in which historically marginalized groups of parents engage.

Additionally, schools often have a preset agenda that supports a deferential dynamic where parents are involved, but not too involved—similar to a proponent who supports the school's agenda without imposing his or her own ideas, opinions, or questions (Cooper, 2009; Doucet, 2011; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). There is a "sweet spot," so to speak, of parents who are willing to volunteer or be a teacher's aide of sorts. Parents who take on too much responsibility or have too much say are seen as "pushy" or are viewed as thinking that they know more about their child's schooling than the teacher. This kind of engagement can make teachers feel professionally undermined (Lareau, 1987).

In order to move beyond definitions of parent involvement that are constructed without consideration of race, racism, and power dynamics, it is imperative to include an examination of the context, structural racism, and barriers that Black families face to understand how those factors influence how parent involvement is enacted and perceived by Black parents—which CRT provides. This framework also allows for the value that Black parents hold for education to be highlighted. There has been a long legacy that documents the barriers that Black parents have had to endure and challenge in order to educate their children. For instance, following the Civil War, Black parents pressed for, founded, and ran many Black schools, representing the importance Black parents have placed on education even in the face of racism and inequitable treatment of their children (Anderson, 1988). In the following paragraphs I discuss how structural racism influences Black parents' involvement including: 1) barriers parents face in their interactions with schools, 2) how they are perceived by educators, 3) alternate methods of

engagement, 4) the ways they view schools as a mainstream institution and 5) the myriad ways that trust between these two stakeholders may be compromised. Without these considerations the entirety of how Black parents engage and advocate for their children's education, and the underlying reasons for such engagement and advocacy, are not fully understood.

**Intersections of Critical Consciousness & Critical Race Theory**

Numerous structural barriers impede Black parents' participation in schools. These barriers can be social, cultural, linguistic, and economic in nature and include the timing of school-based events (Finders & Lewis, 1994; Cooper, 2019), lack of social networks (Lareau, 1987), lack of knowledge of how schools are organized (Delgado-Gaitian, 1991), and economic constraints. When parents were asked about barriers to their parent involvement, they listed lack of autonomy and flexibility, inability to leave or get days off in order to attend school events, and not having a car as impediments to their presence at the school site (Finders & Lewis, 1994). These barriers create a racial divide that supports the ease of access for some parents and restricts others. For example, McNeal (1999) found differences in a traditional assessment of parent involvement (participation in parent-teacher organization, parental monitoring, and use of educational support strategies) by race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, with the largest differences being in levels of school-based involvement. Teachers' views of nonparticipating parents, or those who are not physically present in school buildings due to the barriers listed, remain based on a deficit model. Instead of readily categorizing parents who face these barriers as uninvolved, educators should instead be more aware of the structural constraints that Black parents face when making judgments about their level of concern for their children's education. Otherwise this definition and metric of parent involvement may be misrepresentative of Black families.

Lareau and Horvat (1999) found that when Black parents approached their children's schools they were faced with more barriers and difficulties than white parents from the same social class. With a sample of 24 parents, (12 white parents and 12 Black parents) Lareau and Horvat's (1999) interviews suggested that when parents approach the schools with suspicion and hostility, white parents do not have to consider the historical pattern of racism in schools that Black parents face. Rather their whiteness in and of itself allows them to enter the school and expect for them to be helpful, which gives them an advantage and enables them to comply with the deferential standard of school involvement (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). This work concluded that race independently shapes school experiences by highlighting the social and cultural resources that white parents possess and are easily able to convert into education advantages. This notion supports the whiteness as property component of CRT because these parent behaviors align with, comply with, and are validated and legitimized by the dominant ideology held by the broader society.

A second way that racism affects parent involvement is through the perceptions that school personnel have of Black parents. Although it may be more difficult for Black parents to engage in school-based involvement, due to the barriers discussed, it may be possible that even when they are engaged in ways schools prefer, their involvement is still devalued. Many teachers and principals, unfortunately, view Black parents through a deficit lens and fail to attribute their oppressive experiences to a system that limits their access (Cooper, 2003; Johnson, 2015). For instance, studies show differing reports of school-based involvement between parents and teachers (Calzada et al., 2015; McKay, Atkins, Hawking, Brown, & Lynn, 2003). In a study examining Latino and Afro-Caribbean immigrant parents' school involvement, parents rated their involvement in their children's education at a rate nearly twice as much as their children's

teachers rated those same actions (Calzada et al., 2015). This incongruence between parents' and teachers' rating may be due to teachers discounting the involvement behaviors of Black parents even when these behaviors parallel the more mainstream, recognized forms of behavior.

Research also suggests that teachers actually reject Black parent involvement by making Black parents feel unwelcome by requesting that they do not participate. In a qualitative study Reynolds, Howard, and Jones (2015) describe the reported experiences of Black fathers' efforts to engage in schools on behalf of their children. This kind of participation, what Diamond, Wang, and Gomez (2004) term "front stage involvement," is most recognized by educators (Epstein, 1991). Yet, these Black fathers reported feeling unwelcomed at their children's schools, disrespected, and discriminated against by school officials, and looked at with suspicion and fear by almost everyone they encountered at the school. Two weeks into the school year, one father in the study was asked not to walk his first grader all the way to his classroom in the mornings as people "did not know who he was" and were "uncomfortable". He was asked to instead, walk his son from his home directly across the street to the corner, near the school, and allow him to walk into the building alone. Instances like this detail a paradox where parents of color, especially Black fathers, are largely criticized for not being involved; however, when they are involved, they are faced with numerous barriers and are dismissed or repressed by the school due to biases and stereotypes. This supports the CRT notion of whiteness as property. Property is theorized to function in several ways: 1) the rights of disposition, 2) the right to use and enjoyment, 3) reputation and status property, and 4) the absolute right to exclude (Ladson-Billings, 1999). This exclusion from the school space results in a "lose-lose" situation for Black parents in that they are pathologized when they do interact with schools and vilified if they do not.

The recognition of racism present in schools coupled with the awareness of prevailing deficit views of Black parents, may make parents more comfortable engaging in home-based involvement actions instead. For instance, unlike Diamond et al. (2004), Bhargava and Witherspoon (2015) noted a shift in activity and found that Black parents are more engaged in home-based involvement than school-based involvement or volunteerism. Jackson and Remillard (2005) found that although about 30% of the Black parents they interviewed attended school functions on a regular basis, all reported monitoring their children's progress in school and finding ways to monitor their children's learning experiences outside of the school setting. In a study of 161 Black parents, reports of awareness of racism were positively associated with reports of home-based involvement and negatively correlated with reports of school-based involvement (McKay et al., 2003). These studies exemplify how Black parents are involved in their children's education but perhaps less so at the school site due to the discomfort racial bias brings when interfacing with school officials and the perception that it is an unwelcome space.

Parents may harbor negative feelings towards schools because of previous direct or vicarious negative experiences (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Further observations of blatant racism or feelings of discrimination may cause Black parents to take on a "defensive stance" (p. 53) when interacting in school settings (Cooper, 2019). Even when there are clear invitations to school events, Black parents may be reticent due to their perception that school officials may hold discriminatory attitudes and biases towards them (Finders & Lewis, 1994). Using a CC perspective, these parents are assuming what Watts and colleagues (2011) label as a critical stance or an understanding of the ways in which structural racism creates societal inequities. These perceptions may also be informed by their own school experiences, when they were students themselves, or transfer from their experiences with other institutions. For example,

research has found a connection between Black mothers' memories of racial discrimination in their own schooling and their subsequent level of involvement in their children's school (Cooper, 2005, 2007; Rowley, Helaire, & Banerjee, 2010). Conversely, it is possible that mothers who remembered their own teachers negatively and felt less comfortable with their child's teacher viewed their involvement as an important way to protect their children. Therefore, whether these experiences of discrimination occur as a child or as an adult, they may in fact inform parents' behavior or perceptions of their ability to engage with schools in meaningful ways and supports the emphasis that CRT places on the experiential knowledge of people of color as valid and legitimate.

Within the context of schools, trust is especially essential for cooperation toward a common goal—in this case, quality education for children. However, trust between Black Americans and U.S. institutions may be hard to establish. In a survey of adults in the United States, the Pew Research Center found that 61% of Black Americans and 53% of Latinos reported low levels of trust in the fairness of American society on a social trust index, as compared to only 32% of white Americans (Taylor, Funk, & Clark, 2007). These statistics are not surprising, considering the numerous instances of discrimination, mistreatment, exclusion, and even execution by state-sanctioned and federal institutions. The court systems, police, social services, private and public industries, healthcare systems, and schools all have had their discriminatory practices highlighted via social media and the news. If Black people perceive that an institution is not procedurally just, trust is near impossible to establish (Tyler, Goff, & MacCoun, 2015); schools are not exempt from this prerequisite.

If effective parent involvement is intended to be a partnership between institutions and families (Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Johnson, 2015), one must consider what may thwart the

formation of positive relationships between Black parents and schools. As Yeager and colleagues (2017) posit, a prerequisite for institutional trust is the perception that institutions are "procedurally just" and that those within the institution have "personal regard" and respect for those being served (p. 659). Awareness of racial inequities may lead Black parents to be wary and distrustful–which may in turn undermine the traditional ways they are expected to be involved in their children's schools (Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Ditlman, & Crosby, 2008; Ross, Marchand, Cox, & Rowley, 2018). It may be unwise for Black parents to blindly trust schools insofar that "parents who do not question, challenge, and critique their schools and their practices…are entrusting the fate of their children to the schools" (Howard & Reynolds, 2008, p. 92).

In the context of schools, trust is especially essential for cooperation toward a common goal—in this case, quality education for Black children. Given extensive outcome data, Black parents' faith in schools would be rooted in an unearned trust or mistrust, as schools have been consistently unsuccessful in meeting the needs of Black students. Parker and Villalpando (2007) assert that the issue of trust and mistrust between families of colors and education leaders and teacher is cannot be ignored if trying to achieve racial equity in schools. The idea of a common goal relates to the CRT notion of interest convergence. Interest convergence explains that the Civil Rights gains that were made for Black Americans in this country would not have happened had white Americans not also benefited from supporting certain political concessions as well (Bell, 1980). In other words, initiatives and decisions that are beneficial for people of color only emerge when they are also in the best interest of white Americans (Salter & Haugen, 2017). In the case of school trust, a CRT analysis may suggest a lack of interest convergence in that schools do not gain anything from a mutual trust with Black parents.

This is an important conundrum. Even with a decreased level of trust in schools, parents still want their children to be successful and fairly treated and must have some relationship with the schools in attempts to ensure that success. Friesen and Huff (1990 as cited in Burke, 2012) offer the hypothesis that families who advocate for their children are possibly doing so because of a foundational distrust in the school system. Black parents' understandings of inequities and consequential distrust in the schooling system influences the ways they decide to engage. These instances that influence Black parents' trust in schools undoubtedly inform their perceptions of the schools, their comfort within it and whether they feel as if the school treats and represents them fairly. These perceptions may result in two divergent outcomes—parents may become more present within the schools due to this distrust and their desire to ensure their child is treated fairly and is successful or conversely it may compel parents to pull away due to the belief that schools are unjust and untrustworthy.

In a recent study of Black parents in a Southern California school district, Latunde (2018) delineates the distrust underserved parents can harbor that can undermine partnership efforts. Parents in this study formed a District-sanctioned organization and sought to engage parents as a collective around systemic issues Black students faced in the schools they attended. The formation of this parent collective speaks directly to what Howard and Reynolds discussed in their study:

> "One of the themes that emerged from the focus group discussion was the need for a space to network with other African American parents. Several of the participants stated that parents needed a consistent place to meet, network and share information about various resources available to their children. The importance of collaboration seemed to be based on a common set of experiences that many of the parents believe their children

face in what are supposed to be better school climates. A number of the parents spoke of what they believed to be unfair disciplinary practices their children experienced, while others spoke to the lack of cultural and ethnic diversity in the curriculum, some discussed the need for more African American teachers and administrators in the district" (2008, p. 93).

The parents in Latunde's study formed such a group, negotiated with the district for recognition and resources to facilitate their regular meetings, brought in consultants to educate them about the collective problems Black students were experiencing in the District—such as low test scores, poor attendance, overrepresentation in suspensions and expulsions, and disproportionate special education designations, particularly with emotional disturbance listed as the qualifying disability—and provide them strategies to engage the District around their concerns. This group of Black parents leaned on one another for support as they pushed past their distrust of schools together, sought solutions to systemic problems they observed, and interfaced with school officials who were sometimes reluctant and slow to change. Their collective efforts were deemed necessary and powerful to them, as some had attempted to advocate for their children individually with little success. These parents looked to other parents within this group as allies in a struggle for their students.

Much of parent involvement research misses the opportunity to examine how and in what ways the sometimes oppressive structure of most schools precludes the participation of Black families. Not many researchers have sought to find instances where minoritized parents have unconventionally engaged schools, like the parents in Latunde's study. In order to move beyond the definition of parent involvement that is constructed without consideration of prevalent racial inequities, it is imperative to examine cultural, structural, and contextual mediating factors

rooted in racism that may make Black parents seem absent, apathetic, and uninvolved. With the careful consideration of the roles that race and racism play in shaping the lived experiences of Black parents, a more inclusive, expansive definition of parent involvement can be developed. Therefore, in order to represent Black parents' engagement more fully within schools, an examination linking their understandings of schools as systems to their subsequent behaviors is needed. To this end, CC theory is used to explore how parents' beliefs about racial inequities may influence their motivation to participate, their perceptions of self-efficacy, and the behaviors they engage in regarding their children's education. In the following section, I will map dimensions of CC onto Black parents' involvement processes in order to exemplify how Black parents' beliefs and feelings of efficacy may shape the methods they employ to engage with their children's schools.

**Critical Reflection: Parents' Awareness of Societal & Educational Inequities**

Black parents' psychological processes are just as important to consider as the context and structural forces that affect their lived experiences. Critical reflection calls for the inclusion of historical context as a way to better understand social inequities with an emphasis on understanding the root causes of societal disparities (Watts et al., 2011). Theoretically pairing critical reflection with the contextual and historical clarity around racism that CRT provides can offer possible explanations of the actions Black parents take (or do not take) in schools. Particularly parents who are critically reflective would attribute educational issues such as low enrollment of Black students in AP and honors courses to structural causes. More specifically these parents would be critically aware of inequitable systems, policies, and historical conditions such as racialized tracking which disproportionately enroll Black students into remedial and special education courses (Chapman, 2013; Watts et al., 2011). Conversely, those who are less

critically reflective may perhaps view societal disparities as more individualized and believe that social systems and opportunities are equal and therefore disparities found within them are due to a lack of ability or effort on behalf of Black children (Watts et al., 2011). For instance, the view that Black children are less invested in school is a more individualized explanation of Black-White achievement gaps, with no recognition that the gap is due to disparate opportunities supports the notion of liberalism and meritocracy that CRT challenges (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012).

Although parent critical reflection has not been explicitly studied as such, numerous qualitative studies have focused on parents' perceptions of schools (Cooper, 2003, 2009; Crozier, 1999; Howard & Reynolds, 2009; Olivos, 2006). Cooper (2003) found that Black mothers from low-income and working-class backgrounds did not view the schools as a meritocratic institution. Rather these mothers viewed the "schools as sites of resistance where they try to prevent resource and pedagogical inequity from eroding their children's ability to attain the education they need to succeed in a competitive world" (Cooper, 2003, p. 113). Similarly, in another qualitative study exploring how Black parents believe race will play a role in their child's education, mothers considered the school's racial composition, the behaviors, and views of school personnel, and were keenly aware of the discrimination their children may face (Williams, Banerjee, Lozada-Smith, Lambouths, & Rowley, 2017). The participants in this study were mothers of children in first grade, and even with young children new to the school system, parents were determined to intervene and advocate if they were to perceive that race was negatively shaping their children's' educational experience. Their reflections support the CRT concept of permanence of racism in that the parents in that study recognized the normalized way that race is interwoven into everyday life. These studies exemplify how Black parents are critical

and active in their attempts to ensure that their children are not receiving an inequitable education when identifying systemic inequities within that space.

Therefore, parents who are more critically reflective and take a structural analysis may perhaps enter school prepared, anticipating that they will potentially experience racism. Theorists have posited that having an awareness of systemic racism may serve as a remedy for such oppression (Watts et al., 1999). Therefore, parents who are able to make attributions to structures and policies, may psychologically benefit because they do not attribute racist interactions to themselves or their children but rather, they may attribute discriminatory actions to external structural issues. In an act of resistance to this racism, some parents may choose not to engage schools at all or do so minimally (Olivos, 2006). These examples exemplify a direct link between parents' beliefs and awareness of oppressive structures within the schools and how they situate themselves in relation to the schools. Following the CC paradigm, these beliefs coupled with their motivation and feelings of their own efficacy inform the subsequent actions in which they decide to engage.

**Self-Efficacy: Parents' Perceptions of Their Abilities to Advocate**

In order for parents to enact meaningful change they must believe they are able or efficacious. Psychologist Albert Bandura posits that one has to believe they have personal control over the decisions and activities they undertake and believe that they will be successful (Bandura, 1997). When thinking about Black parents' involvement in schools, it is important to consider whether parents feel like they are able to produce a desired result. Parents who have a higher sense of self-efficacy communicate higher expectations to their children and provide support resulting in positive educational processes both directly and indirectly (Diemer & Li, 2011). When parents have a strong and positive sense of their own efficacy, they also feel more

able to engage in effective problem-solving efforts with schools (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 1996). However, there are various experiences and thoughts that may affect feelings of efficacy, such as awareness of structural barriers that constrain the ability to act or parents' past experiences with schools which might make Black parents feel like their efforts might not be successful.

Political efficacy is a construct studied largely in political science. It has been adapted and applied to CC work and is generally thought of to be people's internal beliefs about their capacity to make effective change (Watts et al., 2011). Further, it can also be understood as one's sense of agency and motivations for making social change. In the parent involvement literature, self-efficacy is defined as the belief that parents' can exert a positive impact on their children's academic outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). More specifically, parental self-efficacy can be thought of as parents' belief that they can effect change in school structures, policies, or engage in instances of advocacy to combat observed inequities.

Parents' motivational beliefs are informed not only by their self-efficacy but also their role construction or how they believe they should interact with their children's schools (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). Extending this notion of role construction Lewis-McCoy (2014), discusses how white and Black families engage with schools differently. He posits that white families engage in a behavior referred to as opportunity hoarding, whereas Black families act as beneficiaries (Lewis-McCoy, 2014). Opportunity hoarding captures the ways parents not only influence their own children, but also limit and constrain the ability of other families to access finite resources within schools, often disproportionally and negatively affecting Black families. Further, he contends that it is common for white parents to play the role of consumer in their children's education, meaning they regard

schools as resources that are malleable and customizable. They see themselves with the agency necessary to change school spaces to accommodate their desires and needs. Conversely, Black parents assume the role of beneficiary, viewing the school as spaces for their children to receive a "good education" without much space for customization. The explanations of these differential actions suggest that role construction and aspects of critical reflection may vary by race and that Black parents may have different views of how they should ideally interact with their children's school.

Parents' feelings of efficacy may drive their actions with the school. Conversely, parents may avoid involvement if they believe that their actions will not evince positive change. I assert that these motivational beliefs do play a role in determining parent involvement behaviors, but they do not fully explain parents' subsequent engagement with their children's school. It is rather parents' motivation to engage in conjunction with their analysis of the school as a system that may result in differential forms of action. The recognition of a problem through parents' critical reflection is not enough for change to be made; parents must also believe that their actions will be successful and impactful. Therefore, the two components must be considered together. By better clarifying the links between parents' beliefs about racism and their efficacy and how it may impact their motivation and action within their children's schools gives scholars a more advanced understanding of the interconnected factors that influence parent engagement.

**Critical Action: Critical Parent Engagement**

The final component of CC refers to action taken to produce societal change. Once an individual recognizes an issue and their ability to act, action follows, either collectively or individually (Freire, 1970). More broadly this individual or collective action is in an effort to change an aspect of society that is unjust such as institutional policies and practices (Watts et al.,

2011). A critical approach to the topic of parent involvement would hypothesize that Black parents' perceived lack of involvement is a consequence of structures and systems that shape the lived experiences of people of color and create inequities (Fernández & López, 2017). In this paper, I argue that *critical parent engagement* (see Table 2.1) is a form of critical action that is different from traditional conceptualizations of parent school involvement.

I intentionally use the term engagement instead of involvement. Engagement has been used as a more inclusive term that recognizes more of an array of parents' efforts to motivate and nurture children's educational growth in various spaces (Reynolds, 2010; Wilson, 2019). The addition of the word critical to parent engagement emphasizes that parents are recognizing racism or marginalization within schools in comparison to the traditional forms of engagement that are recognized and preferred by schools (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). *Critical* parent engagement, undergirded by an awareness and understanding of how society influences individual action, is indeed different than dominant forms of involvement and engagement because it takes into consideration the dynamics and influences of race and racism in explaining the experiences of Black families in schools, while recognizing parents' actions to advocate for their children. Freire (1970) referred to this combination of reflection and action as "praxis" (p. 54). Considering the salience of race in schooling, incorporating these dynamics between Black families and schools in a conceptual framework of Black parent involvement is vital.

Scholars have used CRT methodologies such as counterstorytelling (Yosso, 2005; Reynolds, 2010) to explore how parents are interested and involved in their children's schools in ways that I would categorize as critical parent engagement. For example, Doucet's (2011) study of the school engagement of Haitian immigrant parents recognizes the reasons Haitian parents are sometimes resistant to creating partnerships with schools. Through her use of counterstories,

Doucet describes how Haitian parents are interested in their children's' education but are resistant to traditional forms of parent involvement because they associate schools with the Americanization of their children. These parents intentionally maintain privacy, are strict, and discourage friendships in hopes that they can retain aspects of the home culture for their children's benefit. However, "…rooted in a deeply felt need to protect and ensure their children's futures" (p. 2706), parents in her study felt compelled to go to the school and resolve issues if mistreatment or discrimination was suspected. Counterstorytelling as a methodology in this study enabled the voice of a community whose voice is regularly overlooked, to share instances of advocacy and highlight the investment that these parents had in their children's futures.

Similarly, Howard and Reynolds (2008) employed CRT and qualitative interviews to articulate middle class Black parents' varying definitions of what it meant to be involved in their children's schools. Parents' responses varied from traditional participation, such as attending 'back to school nights' or open houses to more critical engagement like demanding that their children have certain services such as individual education plans, access to speech pathologists, etc. that the school and district are required to provide (Howard & Reynolds, 2008). Parents who stay informed and feel comfortable to challenge, question, and critique their children's schools possess an awareness of racism within schools which is a form of critical reflection which facilitates their political efficacy. When parents recognize that blindly leaving the fate of their children to schools may translate into them being negatively impacted by racial dynamics and inequitable structures, it is even more important for them to engage and advocate.

These actions represent a vigilant form of parent involvement with a sole purpose of protection from mistreatment and discrimination (Rowley et al., 2010). After experiencing acute criticism and discrimination from school officials, Black parents may find it even more necessary

to engage and advocate to ensure favorable outcomes for their children. Vigilant parent involvement is similar to critical parent engagement in that they both are racialized and conscious actions Black parents engage in to make sure that teachers are not mistreating their children. However, critical parent engagement posits a recognition and analysis of structural racism and historical racism present in schools. Various forms of critical parent engagement can manifest from this recognition including ensuring teachers know who they are, eliminating the possibility for negative stereotypes to be made about their involvement. Parents may make it a point to understand chains of command and understand how to advocate and make their voices heard if they suspect maltreatment or discrimination. Collaboration amongst parents has been documented within parental involvement research (Howard & Reynolds, 2008) and exemplifies group agency where parents can exert a powerful collective voice in the educational process of their children in the face of systemic racism and exclusion.

**Discussion and Future Directions**

This integration of CRT and CC theories provides a foundation for understanding the formation of Black parents' critical parent engagement and holds promise for advancing future work examining Black parents and public schools. For instance, future research studies can employ this integration of theories to consider context and parents' psychological processes that inform their behavior. Specifically, future measures of parental involvement could benefit from this theoretical contribution in order to ensure that they are relevant to the lived experience of Black parents. For instance, many current measures of school-based involvement do not take into consideration the barriers that Black parents may face or alternate ways that they may advocate for their children's education, as discussed earlier. Therefore, the results of such measures may be limited because they are only assessing a narrow example of what is considered to be valid

parent involvement. Additionally, to extend this preliminary integration of CRT and CC, future work in this area should explore how different combinations of parent critical reflection, role construction, and self-efficacy interact and result in various parent actions. For example, parents who believe it is their responsibility to ensure positive academic outcomes for their children but do not feel efficacious in their ability to advocate within schools, may engage in home-based strategies or supplement their children's academic experiences outside of school. Alternatively, parents who construct their role in similar ways but feel efficacious might advocate at the school site if they are critically reflective.

This model of critical parent engagement can be practiced as well. Schools and districts should engage in professional development that focuses on explicating the ways that racism may hinder the positive development and academic outcomes of their Black students and families. A focus on families is critical as parents are often blamed when students do not achieve optimal outcomes. Empathy and understanding of perceived lack of school presence may be facilitated if educators knew the antecedents to Black parent engagement and their racial vigilance. By articulating the societal influences that impact families by emphasizing a social justice framework can enable researchers to contextualize the lived experiences that families are facing and further enable practitioners and policy makers to create better solutions that promote positive outcomes for individuals, families, and communities more generally (James, Lazarevic, Lee, Kuvalanka, McGeorge, 2016; Lerner, 2015). Additionally, nonprofit organizations that work with Black parents can use this work as a way to clarify the historically strained relationships between Black parents and schools, discover strategies to address power, privilege, and oppressive systems, and find ways for Black families to thrive within these systems. Lastly, as this model lays out the basic arguments of what schools value, the concepts outlined here could

prove informative for parents who are sometimes unaware of the macro-level dynamics mediating their experiences with school officials.

**Conclusion**

Although research shows the positive relationship between parent involvement and children's learning and achievement in schools (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995) it is important to understand factors that may facilitate or hinder parents' ability to get involved. By identifying and naming the socially constructed dynamics that create intuitional oppression, researchers, practitioners, and policy makers can work to promote equal rights and opportunities for all accessing the school system. Race is one factor, and through the framework of CRT, I have shown how racism influences the experiences of Black parents and their children within schools. Parents' critical analyses of the ways race functions within schools may determine the ways they engage and advocate on behalf of their children. Employing components of CC, I have advanced a conceptual frame that connects parents' critical reflections of racial inequities to the perceptions of and motivations for their own involvement. I suggest that parents' critical reflections and motivations may influence the ways that they critically engage and advocate for their children within the school system. In sum, this model of parent CC provides a way to understand how these dimensions work in tandem and can answer questions of how race and inequitable structures may influence Black parents' school involvement.

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*Table 2.1. Components of CC and correspondence to proposed model of Black parent CC.*

| Critical Consciousness Scale (Diemer, Rapa, Park, & Perry, 2017) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Critical Reflection | | Critical Motivation | Critical Action |
| Perceived Inequality | Egalitarianism | Sociopolitical Efficacy/Motivation | Sociopolitical Participation |
| **Parental Critical Consciousness Scale** | | | |
| Critical Reflection | | Critical Motivation | Critical Action |
| Parents Awareness of Societal & Educational Inequities | -- | Role Construction & Self-Efficacy | *Critical Parent Engagement* |

## Chapter 3: Exploring Black Parents' Critical Consciousness in Relation to Their Engagement in Their Children's Schools

Decades of scholarly work have identified parent involvement as an important determinant of children's educational achievement and success (Epstein, 1984; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Jeynes, 2005). There is a widespread belief that when parents are involved in their children's education, children perform better in school and report more positive attitudes and behaviors towards learning (Robinson & Harris, 2014). Additionally, research has shown that when parents create a home environment that encourages learning, communicate high but attainable academic expectations, and are involved in their children's education at school, youth are more likely to complete high school, have higher grades and test scores, better attendance, fewer behavioral problems, and greater enrollment in postsecondary education than students whose parents are not as involved (Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Hill & Tyson, 2009). However, schools often expect parents to be engaged in a deferential manner without sharing their own ideas or opinions (Cooper, 2009a; Doucet, 2011a; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). This creates a dichotomy between white, middle-class parents who are seen as present, helpful, and caring and Black parents as contrary, especially those who are working or middle class (Cooper, 2009a). When Black parents do engage with the school in an effort to protect their children and ensure they are receiving an equitable and quality education they are often dismissed as uncaring or disruptive.

This deficit view of Black parents, even when they are present at the school, highlights the ways in which their behavior often does not constitute teacher-preferred norms which then

frames Black parent involvement negatively because their involvement differs from teacher expectations (Cooper, 2003; Cooper & Christie, 2005; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Fine, 1993; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Both historically and more recently, Black parents have engaged with schools in various ways including protesting school boards, organizing their own parent groups, and challenging schools to improve the standards and resources of the schools their children attend (Cooper, 2009a; Wilson, 2019; Yull & Wilson, 2018). Their advocacy represents the long legacy of the Black community's fight for equal educational opportunities and the importance that Black parents place on their children's education (Williams, 2009).

This paper adds to the body of scholarship that takes a strengths-based perspective to illustrate the many ways, both traditionally recognized and non-traditional, that Black parents are not only interested, but also highly invested in their children's academic success in a school system that is inherently inequitable (Ladson-Billings, 2018). By incorporating critical race theory (CRT) and a critical consciousness (CC) framework, this work examines parents' analysis of structural racism that causes inequities within schools and how they involve themselves in their children's schools. Analysis of inequities represents a cognitive precursor to action and has been viewed as a component of CC (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011). The use of CRT and CC provides the structure to explore these questions using the voices of Black parents who may be experiencing and observing these inequitable conditions firsthand.

**Overview of Conceptual Framework**

The integration of CRT and CC will serve as a lens to discuss the shortcomings of previous research on parental involvement as well as advance a new framework that recognizes how Black parents' beliefs about racism pervasive in schools may inform their actions with their children's schools (Marchand, Reynolds Vassar, Diemer, & Rowley, under review). In addition

to their beliefs, parents' previous experiences with schools and other institutions within society may influence how they feel that they can engage with their children's schools. As such, research has shown that parents' previous interactions with teachers and schools do influence their future involvement with their children's schools (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Therefore, further exploring parents' beliefs about whether they had positive or negative experiences with schools when they were a student and if that relates to their motivations to engage currently is important to understand with Black parents, especially with the possibility that they have experienced racist or discriminatory treatment while as a student or parent.

CRT explains the way racism influences the experiences of Black parents and students within schools while challenging and dismantling the dominant narratives of fairness, meritocracy, and colorblindness in education (Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas, 1999). Further, CC, which describes how those who are oppressed or marginalized become aware of the inequitable social conditions they live within and work to rectify them, provides a way to better understand parents' thoughts, motivations, and actions to engage with their children's schools within a space where race influences their interactions and exchanges with school personnel. Together these two frameworks offer a theoretical framework to consider the contextual factors that influence Black parents' school engagement and psychological aspects such as beliefs and efficacy to provide a fuller explanation for Black parent school engagement.

**Influence of Race & Racism on Parent-School Relationships**

Previous research has often regarded parent involvement as the "educational Holy Grail" (Lewis-McCoy, 2014, p. 67) and has defined the concept in many ways. The definition of parent involvement that I will be utilizing moving forward is inclusive of the practices, behaviors, and messages parents communicate with the aim of increasing the academic outcomes of their

children and ensuring they receive a quality education. This definition is broad in the sense that it includes behaviors that parents can engage in both at the school and within the home, communications that they have with their children about school, and parent actions that represent the importance they place on their child's education and future.

Although the definition of parental involvement is broad, educators have often labeled Black parents as "hard to reach" because of schools' reliance on school-centered definitions of what parent involvement is and stereotypes held about them. Schools define their priorities and values for parent engagement and when Black parents do not act in ways that fit that pre-determined definition, they are viewed as uninvolved (Gutman & McCloyd, 2000; Olivos, 2006). Further, parents who are critical of the school or its climate are labeled as "obtrusive" for violating the narrowly defined range of actions that are considered involvement. These deficit-based views about Black parents create a cycle which reifies racial discrimination because they feed into the narrative that legitimizes the exclusion of Black parents from schools. What has not been considered in depth is the ways that parents think about racism present in schools and society and how that might influence their motivations for and actual actions in the schools.

CRT sets the foundational understanding that race and racism are intertwined and omnipresent within society. CRT is both a theoretical lens and a tool that scholars use to challenge dominant discourses that perpetuate racial inequities and oppression (Solorzano, 1997). It includes an analysis of the ways that systems of oppression, including institutional racism, are embedded within the daily lived experiences of people of color. Critical race theorists draw on a few core ideas of the theory that serve as common themes used in CRT scholarship (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Salter & Haugen, 2017; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). First, permanence of racism, presupposes that race is embedded in the American society and infuses

everyday life and mainstream institutions (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). Second, CRT critiques narratives of liberalism, colorblindness, and meritocracy that mask the permanence and centrality of race in society (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993). The next theme is the idea of interest convergence (Bell, 1980) or that support for political gains that benefit people of color are only achieved when they align in some ways with the interests of white Americans. Next, CRT states that whiteness serves as a form of property which confers benefits to the individual who possesses such property (Harris, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT also places importance on experiential knowledge of people of color and uses counterstorytelling as a tool to deconstruct and refute dominant narratives (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

To extend CRT to education, Milner contends "race and racism are endemic, pervasive, widespread, and ingrained in society and thus in education" (Milner, 2007, p. 390). Racism within education manifests as racialized student tracking, inequitable school funding, school re-segregation, higher dropout rates, and disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion, which all put minoritized students at a collective disadvantage (Chapman, 2013; Shollenberger, 2015). As far as parental involvement, scholars have used CRT to critique educational discourses that position Black families as culturally deficient in comparison to white middle-class cultural capital and ways of being (Yosso, 2006). This creates a double bind because as Anderson (2004) describes, families of color are impacted by institutional racism within schools and then viewed in a deficit-based perspective in order to explain the effects of the institutional racism that oppress them.

Instead of recognizing the ways in which racism is inherent and schools and race impacts the experiences of Black children and parents, educators instead prefer to make the more comfortable choice and not tackle difficult issues, but instead adopt colorblind perspectives and

approaches that are racially avoidant (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Chapman, 2013; Wilson, 2019). Educators contend that we are in a post-racial society and that race is no longer as bad as it used to be during Jim Crow Segregation or throughout the Civil Rights era (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). This colorblind ideology imposes the dominant standards of white Americans onto People of color which is a form of racial oppression. Although educators often do not recognize the realities of race, Black parents do. Mazama and Lundy (2012) study the ways in which Black parents avoid public schools because they are disillusioned by the impact of racial barriers that they observe and choose to homeschool their children instead.

Specifically, one of the main CRT ideas, whiteness as property, can be used to explicate how race influences parents' interactions with school. This notion states that whiteness functions as property to be attained that has both social and material value and has been conceptualized to function on four levels: rights of disposition, rights to use and enjoyment, reputation and status property, and the absolute right to exclude. Dixson and Rousseau (2005) argue that the property value of whiteness has been institutionalized in systems and is inextricable in the way society works. For instance, this absolute right to exclude creates a group comprised of a small privileged few that is able to access high quality education and even post-secondary education through the use of essay coaches and test prep courses. In this case parents are usually white or middle to upper class and have the ability to customize, request, and complain about their children's education. Resources are used to reproduce success in a small privileged group instead of devoting those funds for use for public education and the benefit of all.

Lareau and Horvat (1999) suggest that some families possess a form of capital that is more valued by dominant institutions, such as schools. These forms of social capital function similarly to the privilege, access, and status that is afforded to white parents by virtue of their

race. Lareau and Horvat name "whiteness" and contend that it serves as a hidden cultural resource that gives parents an unfair advantage (1999). Bonilla-Silva (2006) refers to this "whiteness" as the normalized ways of being that encompasses the ideologies and behaviors of white people that are deemed as superior to those of people of color. In this sense, whiteness creates the misconception that Black parents do not possess capital, when in fact they just might not be utilizing their capital in ways that are in line with the teachers and school administrators' definition of involvement.

Complicating the way Black parents define their role in the school, research has shown that minoritized parents feel less welcomed at their child's school (Calabrese, 1990; Cooper, 2007). Calabrese (1990) states that even with attempts from the school to include these parents, such as invitations to school events, minoritized parents may be reticent because of they believe that school officials hold discriminatory attitudes and biases towards them. This awareness of inequities within education maybe informed by their own experiences when they were students themselves. Research has found a connection between Black mothers' memories of racial discrimination in their own school and their involvement in their children's school (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Rowley, Helaire, & Banerjee, 2010). Therefore, whether these experiences of discrimination occur as a child or as an adult, they may in fact inform parents' perceptions about the schools and their engagement within that space.

**Black Parents' Critical Consciousness**

CC is defined as the ways in which marginalized or oppressed people learn to critically analyze the social conditions in which they live and their actions to change them (Watts et al., 2011). CC can be applied to help explain the ways in which parents are making sense of the inequities and discriminatory experiences they may be facing in schools. Recent scholarship has

delineated three major components of CC, including: critical reflection, critical motivation, and critical action (Watts et al., 2011). Critical reflection refers to the awareness and analysis of structural oppression including the social, economic, and political conditions that are created by power structures and the moral rejection of these inequities (Diemer, Rapa, Park, & Perry, 2017). Structural oppression can take shape in many ways, including race-based, gender-based and class-based. Therefore, critical reflection includes the analysis of racist, sexist, or classist systems of oppression that hinder the full agency of individuals due to oppressive societal structures.

The second dimension, critical motivation, is viewed as individuals' perceptions of their ability and motivation to create social change (Diemer, McWhirter, Ozer, & Rapa, 2015). This dimension can be viewed as political efficacy, either internal—individual's own beliefs about being change agents or external—beliefs that institutions are responsible to political interests (Watts et al., 2011). The last component, critical action is defined as actions, whether performed individually or in a group that changes aspects or policies within society that are perceived to be unjust (Watts et al., 2011). Whereas critical reflection can be thought of as the cognitive component of CC, critical action is thought to be the behavioral component (Diemer et al., 2015).

Although CC was first conceptualized by Paulo Freire in his work with Brazilian adults (Freire, 1970), most empirical research on CC has been with youth populations. Possible applications of the CC framework to adults, specifically with parents, has been less explored (see Bañales et al., 2019, for an exception). When thinking about how CC may operate specifically for Black parents, their awareness and critical analysis of inequities in schools such as racialized tracking, disproportionate suspension rates, and unbalanced allocation of funds, may influence

how they view the school and inform the way they view the school and how they subsequently engage. For instance, Sperling and Vaughn (2009) explored how Black parents make sense of the Black-white achievement gap. They found two main groups of parents: culture blaming parents and structure blaming parents. Culture blaming parents made attributions for the achievement gap that blamed the individual (e.g., citing differences in work ethic, attitudes, merit) and structure-blaming parents made structural attributions (e.g., citing institutional racism, discrimination systemic impediments) about the root causes of the racial academic achievement gap.

Black parents' critical action may result from feelings of mistrust in the schools. Their awareness of teachers' negative stereotypes of Black families could result in their withdrawal or lack of engagement (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002; Mazama & Lundy, 2012; Noguera, 2001). At the same time, a parent who is critically analytic of racial inequities may respond to deficit framing of Black families with increased involvement and monitoring of teacher's behavior. For example, in a sample of six Black adolescents, O'Connor (1997) showed how their awareness of how race and class constrained the opportunities for individuals like them led to increased effort and performance. Moreover, these six students indicated that their parents either confronted teachers or filed formal complaints in instances at school that could be interpreted as racist, whereas other students in the larger study reported that their parents chose to not challenge these issues. This example demonstrates how parents' CC may compel them to engage in critical action to rectify instances they perceived to racist.

**The Present Study**

The goal of this paper is to explore parents' beliefs of education and societal inequities. In addition to examining the types of attributions they make, I will explore whether their past

experiences in school shape the role they choose to play in their children's education and their behaviors with their children's school. This inquiry lends itself to a qualitative approach. Highlighting the stories and experiences that these parents share will put the knowledge building in their hands instead of the continual generation of knowledge that marginalizes, oppresses, and deems these experiences as deficits.

Below I present the questions that guide this study:

1. How do Black parents recognize systemic educational inequities?
2. How do Black parents describe their motivations for interacting with their children's schools?
3. How do Black parents describe their school engagement?
4. How does their critical analysis of educational inequities influence their engagement?

## Method

### Site Selection

Parent participants were recruited through their previous participation in a larger survey-based study, *Parenting and Academic STEM Success Survey (PAASS)*. The *PAASS* project is a study of approximately 380 Black middle school students, their parents, and their math and science teachers intended to identify mechanisms that lead to the improved STEM motivation and the achievement of Black youth. Students were enrolled in middle schools within the following three school districts: Walnut Heights Unified School District, Kendall County Public Schools, and Jackson Hills Consolidated School District (all district names are pseudonyms; see Table 3.1). Across these three districts, students attended five different middle schools that have documented racial achievement gaps. These schools vary in their format and size (see Table 3.2). For example, among these five schools there are International Baccalaureate Schools, K-8

centers, and larger middle schools that have over 900 students in 6-8 grade. The percentage of students who receive free or reduced lunch from these schools varies from 41-86%. These schools are racially diverse and the percentage of Black students at each varies from 28-71%. Even amidst these similarities there are also notable differences amongst these communities. On average, families in Jackson Hills earn less money per year than the other two communities and most of the students within that district are Black. Walnut Heights serves a working-class population with greater economic and racial stratification and diversity. Kendall County Public is the most affluent area of the three with the smallest Black population and is considered rural by the National Center for Educational Statistics in the 2017-2018 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

**Participants**

The participants in this study are 20 parents of middle school students who self-identify as Black (see Table 3.3; all names are pseudonyms). Participants were chosen so that parents from all five schools were represented equally within the study in order to get a range of perspectives and backgrounds. I use the term parents, but of the 20, one participant indicated that she was the child's aunt and legal guardian, and one participant identified as a grandmother and legal guardian. The large majority ($n$ = 19, 95%) of participants were women (all mothers, with the exception of one aunt and one grandmother) and the one male participant identified as a father. Participants ranged in age from 31- 55 years of age ($M$ = 42.00, $SD$ = 6.25). Fifty percent of participants ($n$ = 10) indicated that they were single, 40% ($n$ = 8) indicated they were married and 10% ($n$ =2) indicated that they were divorced. The socioeconomic status of these participants varied as evidenced by their highest level of education and their reported incomes. Of the 20 participants, 30% ($n$ = 6) indicated that they had a master's degree, 5% ($n$ = 1) completed some

graduate school, 5% (*n* = 1) participant had a bachelor's degree, 25% (*n* = 5) reported having an associate, trade, or technical degree, 20% (*n* = 4) indicated they had completed some college, 5% (*n* = 1) indicated receiving a high school diploma, and 10% (*n* = 2) had less than a high school diploma. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), the educational attainment of this sample is higher than the national rates for African American adults in the United States. Half of the participants (*n* = 10) indicated that they were working full time, one (5%) worked part time, two (10%) participants were participating in educational/job training, one (5%) was a disabled worker, one (5%) was a full-time parent/homemaker, and two (10%) were looking for work but not in a training program. Reported occupations can be found in Table 3.1. Six parents (30%) reported that their yearly household income was less than $10,000, three (15%) reported it was between $10,000- $19,999, two (10%) reported it being between $30,000 - $39,999, three (15%) reported it between $40,000 – $49,999, one (5%) between $50,000 - $59,999, one (5%) between $70,000 – $79,999, and two (10%) reported their household income as above $100,000 a year.

**Procedure**

Using a list of eligible *PAASS* parents, recruitment letters were sent out via email and recruitment phone calls were made for those parents who did not respond to the initial email. Through these emails and phone calls, the study aims, compensation, and confidentiality guidelines were described (see Appendix 2 for scripts). Willing parents were interviewed in person, one-on-one, and at the location of their choosing (e.g., parents' homes, local coffee shops, or public libraries) in the fall of 2017 and early 2018. Interviews lasted approximately one hour (range: 45 to 90 minutes). At the beginning of each interview, consent, and permission to record the interview were obtained.

To explore my research questions, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted. This methodology allowed me to highlight Black parents' epistemologies, voices, and experiences. In-depth interviews serve as a meaning-making endeavor and are a conversation between interviewer and interviewee requiring active asking and listening (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). Additionally, "in depth interviews are also particularly useful for accessing subjugate knowledge. Those who are often marginalized in a society…may have hidden experiences and knowledge that have been excluded from mainstream use of quantitative research methods" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 98).

An interview protocol (see Appendix 2) was used as a guide. However, the intent was for the session to flow like a conversation or narrative approach of collecting stories from parents about their lived and told experiences (Creswell, 2013). The interview was divided in to four sections: 1) hypothetical vignette and follow up questions, 2) parents' past experiences as a student, 3) parents' current experiences with their child's school, and 4) a current local news event and follow up questions.

The sample vignette and accompanying follow up questions (section 1) were used to explore whether parents made more societal or individualistic attributions for inequity and issues present in schools (Voight, 2017). Using vignettes is a method that can elicit perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes from responses or comments to stories depicting scenarios and situations (Barter & Renold, 1999). The vignette included in the interview protocol details the experiences of Devin, a 15-year old Black male who drops out of school and ends up in a juvenile detention center. The vignette mentions that his mother works two jobs and that he lives with her and three younger siblings and also discusses that he has had to change schools often due to school closures because of low enrollment. Parents are asked follow-up questions to

understand why they think Devin dropped out. Asking Black parents about issues that may relate to their lived experiences may be best to be done with a hypothetical story so parents do not feel pressure to answer in a certain way due to social desirability and are able to distance themselves from the situation in the vignette and provide their honest perceptions, opinions, and beliefs.

The subsequent questions (section 2 and 3) were used to gather information on parents' past experiences with schooling as well as their perceptions of their own parents' involvement in the schools and parents actual interactions with their child's schools. Lastly, the current local news event (section 4) functioned similarly to the vignette: to gauge what parents believed the underlying cause of an experience of a Black child in a school. This current news event reported an incident that happened in a local middle school where a young Black boy was pulled out of his chair by his teacher when he did not stand for the pledge of allegiance. Follow up questions were meant to gauge how parents would respond if they were in that situation. Upon completion of the interviews, participants received a $20 gift card. Interview recordings were transcribed by a transcription service.

**Data Analysis**

The interview data were initially analyzed using a data reduction protocol called the Rigorous and Accelerated Data Reduction (RADaR) technique (Watkins, 2017). The RADaR technique utilizes spreadsheets to create all-inclusive data tables which undergo several iterations of data reduction. A benefit of this process it allows analysts to focus on the content of the data without relying heavily on a qualitative data analysis software. At each iteration, the data table becomes shorter, more concise, and more directly aligned with the main research question, a process which is called "data reduction." The lead author led a team approach to data analysis, which is preferred because it is able to "caste a wider analytic net and provide a 'reality check'"

(Saldana, 2008, p. 27) and discussions can be held when there are discrepancies or disagreement in analysis.

The first step is to create a table with each line of the interview entered as a separate row of a spreadsheet program (i.e., Microsoft Excel) and contains all of the same data as the interview transcript. With the research question written at the top of the sheet as a page header, each line of the transcript is read through and marked red if it does not directly respond to the research question. After going through the entire transcript at length independently, the two research analysists working on this transcript met to compare results and determine which lines of data to keep, leaving a much shorter and more specific data table. This process is repeated numerous times and at each phase the data gets shorter and more concise. In the interim of each phase, the two analysts met to compare their data-reduction tables. At this meeting differences that arose between coders as to which lines should be removed or kept were resolved through discussion before continuing on to the next phase.

Watkins (2017) advises that the decision of how many phases of data tables are needed is contingent on two main factors: how sufficient the remaining data in the table is to address the overarching research question and how ready the team feels they can decide on which chunks of data can be coded and included in the final product. For the purposes of this study, the RADaR tables went through four reduction phases, each representing a more narrow and specific response to the initial aim of this study. At the second phase, notes were added to each line summarizing the participants' response or analysts' preliminary jottings (similar to an analytic memo) so as not to solely rely on memory at the next phase (Saldana, 2008). Next, these summary notes were turned into representative codes that could be later used to identify raw segments of text. These codes summarized the data in a way that was purposefully simple and

directly descriptive of the data segment. This first iteration of coding began with the creation of these descriptive codes (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010) and used to create a preliminary set of key concepts. The decision of how many phases of data tables are needed varies by study and from team to team (Watkins, 2017).

The second step of analysis—once all descriptive codes were created—involved grouping similar descriptive codes into more focused or axial codes that better aligned with theory (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) what Saldana calls categories (2008). The outcomes of these categories were themes that reflected the theoretical framework guiding this paper. Next all interviews were reread while members of the research team completed a summarizing worksheet that aligns the data with the initial code structure (see Appendix 3). These worksheets serve two functions: first it provided a second read to each transcript and also identified which themes were exemplified in which interview. Those twenty individual summaries (one for each participant) were then compiled into one master results sheet that indicated which themes arose in which interviews, enabling a comprehensive analysis of all participants' responses at once. In the final step of analysis, representative excerpts were taken from the interviews to illustrate themes. These excerpts were marked in order to go back to the original transcript and ensure that these illustrative excerpts were not taken out of context of the participants' initial intent.

**Validity and Trustworthiness of Study**

In order to ensure that the data that I collect is valid and representative of the participants, initial themes and findings were presented to a sample of Black parents from the original PAASS project. The PAASS project has a community advisory board of Black parents and a presentation of the qualitative results was shared as form of member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). At a regularly scheduled community advisory board meeting, I presented the themes that arose from

the data. Following the presentation, the board and I discussed the themes. This provided parents an opportunity to comment on these findings and interpretations and ensure that they are representative of their experiences. Advisory board members confirmed that the themes that arose were ones that either matched their experiences or that they mirrored what they had heard from other parents.

**Positionality**

In working with Black parents, I recognize that it is important for me to consider my own positionality. As a former middle school teacher in the same district where I attended high school, I was able to see the same school system, from different perspectives. Although I am not a parent, I do draw on my own experiences with my parents and with my former students' parents. As a daughter of Haitian immigrants who were middle class, I recognize the potential similarities and differences between my experiences and my participants' experiences, as well as how that may influence the way in which I interpret the data. As a Black woman, I believe I will be able to relate to some societal experiences that especially mothers will discuss. However, with that, I made it a point to ask many follow up questions in the semi-structured interviews to ensure that I did not fill in any of their experiences with my own experiences or assumptions. I am cognizant that if I do not recognize my positionality, I may let my experiences influence the ways that I make meaning of the data. Rather, I pulled from the work of Rodriguez and her discussion of the responsibility that comes with studying your in-group (2010). In her work, she intentionally named herself as a co-constructor of knowledge and described how she initially disclosed information about herself with participants to reduce the hierarchy that may be perceived between the researcher and the participants. Using this technique that Rodriguez utilized, I was completely candid with parents and let them know I am not a parent but a former

teacher and current graduate student who is interested in these questions because of my experiences with my own parents and my observations of parent involvement from the perspective of a public school teacher.

Within the analysis team, positionality was discussed and considered. The entire team consisted of a Black female graduate student (first author), Black female professor (second author), a Latina graduate student, two Latina undergraduates, a middle eastern female undergraduate student, two Black female undergraduates, one Indian female international undergraduate student, one Black male undergraduate student, and one white female undergraduate student. For instance, each analyst completed a positionality statement and within each coding pair, perspectives and points of understanding were discussed.

## Results

In the section, I present the results in two ways: first, I present the five emergent themes, and then I present profiles of three participants to illustrate how these themes manifest in Black parents' lived experiences. The five themes were grouped into three larger domains: cognitive, motivational, and behavioral (see Table 3.4), which aligns with the larger theoretical framework that guided the research questions. I present quotations to illustrate the findings.

### Cognitive Domain: Parents' Analysis of Educational Inequities

The first research question that guided this study was: how do Black parents recognize systemic educational inequities? In response to this question, two themes emerged that reflected the cognitive domain: critical reflection and traditional views. This domain closely mirrors critical reflection or the analysis of societal inequities which represents the cognitive component of CC (Watts et al., 2011). The critical reflection theme consisted of parents' awareness of the ways racial conditions influence or limit their or their children's experiences. The traditional

views theme consisted of beliefs that parents had about the root cause of racial issues in education that did not reference underlying structural inequities.

***Critical reflection*.** Critical reflection is defined as the analysis of the ways that structural conditions impact observed racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender disparities. This includes a historical understanding of policies and practices that contribute to these disparities in society (Watts, et al., 2011). When discussing the hypothetical situation vignette which describes the precursors that led to Devin dropping out, Rashaad, whose daughter attends Palmer Middle School talked about how school closures could play a role when he stated:

> If he's going to schools that have been closed down due to lack of enrollment those are usually identified by dying communities hence the lack of enrollment; or if [it's] not the community itself dying, the institution is. So, it's going to be under-funded which will mean less opportunity, which would mean just less options in terms of seeing success.

This quote exemplifies the minority of parents who attended to systemic influences which impact Devin's situation such as school closures, lack of opportunities in Black communities, higher rates of incarceration for Black males, or no tolerance disciplinary policies in schools (Noguera, 2003; Watson & Bogotch, 2015). These inequities point to structural racism and lends itself to the CRT notion of permanence of racism in that they represent patterns of actions that provide fewer benefits for Black Americans within schools than other races on an ongoing basis (Golash-Boza, 2016).

Parents discussed how societal level policies and practices influence their children's education and more broadly Black children's education as a whole when discussing their real lived experiences. Of the 20 Black parents who participated in the interviews, the vast majority (18/20) discussed educational inequities and recognized structural reasons as their cause. For

example, Lisa who has a son who attended Southridge, articulated how inequitable funding for schools plays a role in her son's education when she explained that race has to do with how much money schools receive. She further expressed that all schools should be funded equally regardless of where a child lives, how much money their family makes, or their race. That is, all children should have access to the same quality of education. Lisa's explanation of inequitable funding indicates her level of critical social analysis or critical reflection—a component of CC—because it represents her evaluation of social and economic inequities that influence her son's experiences in school.

Additionally, many parents discussed their thoughts on diversity within the schools, either critiquing a lack of diversity among school staff or praising strides that they observed being made like an increasing number of Black teachers being hired over the years. Parents were aware that the potential racial bias, whether implicit or explicit, and lack of culturally familiarity between white teachers and Black students often impacts students' educational and disciplinary outcomes (Yull & Wilson, 2018). For instance, Rose, who has a son who attends Evergreen Middle, shares why she thinks having a mostly homogenous white teaching staff could be detrimental to Black students when she stated:

> I interviewed the…one black teacher, and she was just really honest with me about how our kids are treated…she was like, "they don't understand them, and they don't know how to deal with that. They'd rather shoo them away. If they even look like they're…oppositional, they'll just pass them along." And see that's not right.

Not only is Rose recognizing the lack of diversity in the teaching staff but she also recognizes how that feeds into a systemic issue which causes Black students to be ignored and underserved. About a quarter of the parents recognized the lack of teachers within the building

that share the same racial background. Parents' recognition of the mismatch between teacher and student suggests that these parents are aware that the teaching force remains overwhelmingly white and female (Ladson-Billings, 2011). A 2016 report conducted by the Department of Education found that although educator diversity has increased in the past decade it is still overwhelmingly homogenous and largely white. Their results found that 82% of educators are white and only 20% of public schools principals were individuals of color. Parents' discussion of this lack of representation was related to their understanding of how that may negatively affect their children's experiences in schools.

Additionally, parents discussed their recognition of ways Black parents may be marginalized due to stereotypes about Black parents. This awareness of deficit-based perceptions about Black parents emerged and were included within this theme. For example, Erika whose son attended Evergreen stated, "I feel like for African-American students…people and educators sometimes think we don't care." Other parents described the ways in which they recognize that school officials may view Black parents from a deficit-based perspective which is indicative of a systemic understanding of educator's negative views as stereotypical narratives instead of an individualized personal prejudice (Cooper, 2009a; Fine, 1993; Noguera, 2001). For instance, Wendy, whose daughter attended Washington stated, "I need them to take me seriously, I need them to know that I'm intelligent too and we need to handle this situation…I don't want to be that crazy Black parent, you know, causing problems." In this quote, Wendy is aware of the different ways that the schools may perceive her whether or not she agrees and endorses these stereotypes as true. She is further pointing to her understanding that teachers and administrators may have their own pre-conceived beliefs about her as a Black parent before she even enters that space.

***Traditional views.*** This subtheme captures ways in which parents discussed individual causes, rather than structural ones, in their discussion of educational disparities. For instance, in their discussion of the hypothetical scenario involving Devin, the large majority of parents offered reasons such as the lack of parental presence, hanging out with friends who may be a negative influence, and being disrespectful to teachers. In other words, there was no reference to any contextual or historical level factors that created Devin's situation but instead made references to Devin's work ethic, decisions, or his home life.

Even outside of explanations of the vignette, some parents shared that race did not influence their child's education. One question asked to all participants was "do you believe that race influences your children's school experiences/academic outcomes?" In response to that question, nine parents said yes, seven said no, and four were unsure of whether race influenced their child's education. The eleven parents who were unsure or said no did not view race as a factor or identify instances of racism, discriminatory treatment, as impactful even when discussing issues that they have had with their children's schools. This is an interesting finding in that the majority of parents were able to understand systemic racial forces that impact schools but when asked about their child specifically they minimized the role of race in their children's education. This indicates that they may be more apt to recognizing institutional racism in comparison to individual instances of racism or discrimination.

It is important to note that these themes are not mutually exclusive and that parents often made attributions that were a combination of both critical reflection and traditional views. Many parents showed critical reflection in some instances and referred to structural racism while also making more traditional attributions in regard to another inequity. For example, Rashaad, whose daughter attended Palmer Middle recognized racial tracking, the negative impact of school

closures, and recounted instances of how his daughter felt marginalized in school as one of the few Black girls in her class, but ultimately made individual attributions about Devin's situation and stated that:

> I would say he's responsible for 80% of the problem just because certain actions are controllable. The fact that he doesn't get along with his teachers is part of it. The fact that he's not in shape of looking to be better than the examples in front of him…lack of supervision, support, opportunity.

About half of the parents who recognized structural causes also discussed individual attributions to societal or educational inequities. For example, Jennifer, who had custody of her nephew discussed how Black men are more likely to be targeted by police whether they "have on a hoodie [or] they're driving an older model car with tinted windows" but at another point in the interview she shared that she attributed Devin's situation to a lack of family support and felt "that's pretty much the norm for African-Americans." Jennifer is communicating an awareness of how Black men are surveilled but at the same time does not make connections to structural aspects that can explain Devin's situation. Her attributions to Devin's lack of family support and claim that this is normal for African American families in a way endorses colorblind beliefs by not recognizing the structural and systemic influences that contributed to Devin ending up in a juvenile detention center. This provides evidence that parents can hold both types of beliefs rather than solely ascribing to one or the other. Together, the ways that parents are thinking about educational inequity aligns with both CRT and CC. More specifically it speaks to the variation within Black parents critical social analysis and the complexity in which Black parents recognize racism as an impacting factor in their children's education. Scholars have posited the ways in which racism is more covert and hidden than the racism of the past (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Kohli,

Pizarro, & Nevárez, 2017) and this may play a role in parents' ability to readily identify and analyze discriminatory instances and inequities present in school as racism.

**Motivational Domain: What Facilitates Action**

The second domain consisted of one theme—efficacy—that reflected factors that facilitated critical parent engagement with their children's schools. Three subthemes explain various considerations that inform parents interactions with their children's schools including: 1) internal efficacy, 2) knowledge of school, and 3) external efficacy.

***Internal Efficacy***. In the parent involvement literature, parental self-efficacy has been conceptualized as parents' beliefs in their ability to positively engage with their children's school and their perception of their ability to control school outcomes. It has been shown to be positively associated with increased parental involvement at the school site (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). About a quarter of parents in this study explicitly discussed feeling as if they had the skills to engage with their children's school, their ability to help their children with their homework, and their ability to supplement their child's education. Parents often discussed that they felt confident in their ability to advocate for their children because of what they observed of their parents when they were children. For instance, Trina explains witnessing her father being at her school and telling the principal, "you know my expectation is that my kid is gonna get the same amount of help as every other kid in that class." She further recounts that seeing her parents active in her education as a child set the example for her to do the same for her own children.

***Knowledge of school.*** Parents described many instances when they were cognizant of how schools functioned. Some parents had knowledge of school structures which helped them feel more agentic and engage in ways they may not have been able to otherwise. About half of

the parents made mention of how their ability to understand and navigate school structures enabled them to interact in that space in a positive way. For example, Michelle described a time when her knowledge of school policies and procedures facilitated her ability to advocate for her daughter, who needed to take medication at school. Michelle's daughter was falsely told that she could self-medicate, and when the administrators at the school were unwilling to listen to Michelle's disagreement with this, she obtained written documentation from the district office requiring a school nurse to administer the medication.

***External Efficacy.*** External efficacy refers to people's belief about government structures responsiveness to their issues (Morrell, 2003). In the context of this study external efficacy referred parents' views of the fairness and responsiveness of schools to the needs of Black students and Black families. Parents referenced the efficacy of the schools and expressed whether they believed that the they were responsive to the needs of Black students and Black families. Few parents made direct reference to whether they trusted the schools. However, a little more than half of parents made some reference to wanting to move their child to a public school in another area, a charter school, or a private school because they were not happy in some way with their child's current school. For instance, Kimberly talks about how she was not fond of the local public school in her area and chose to put her daughter in private school because she thought that would be a better option and Khadejah described wanting to enroll her daughter in schools so she could attend a school that she deemed as "better." Additionally, Sheila when talking about her youngest child, discussed her frustration with the schools and stated: "I just hope and pray it don't get even worse when he gets older or I am just gone home school him…because I don't trust it." Although when parents discussed whether they felt if schools were responsive, they usually expressed negative perceptions, some parents did express feeling

positively about the schools. For instance, Lisa stated, "he has some good teachers that actually, if something happened, they would call me…even though it's my responsibility to deal with my child, but I feel like they care more, they let me know immediately, and I like that." These quotations exemplify that there was a range of ways that parents felt about the fairness, responsive, and efficacy of the schools in which their children were enrolled in.

The motivational domain supports previous CC research that suggests that efficacy may serve as a mediator between beliefs and actions (Freire, 1970; Watts et al., 2011). Parents who believe they are able to enact meaningful change, those who have knowledge of the ways schools function, and the ways in which they view the responsiveness of that schools may influence the ways that they actually engage with the schools. Surprisingly, what did not arise as a theme where motivations that were particularly race-specific. The three themes within this domain seemed raceless and these results suggest that parents' motivations within this sample do not align with specific racial concerns or realizations.

**Behavioral Domain: Parents' Actions for Educational Well-being**

In relation to the third research question, parents discussed the varying actions they engaged in around their children's education. As with their parent involvement cognitions, themes for parent engagement tended to be more critical or more traditional. Each of these themes is further divided into their own respective subthemes. Specifically, critical parent engagement was divided into advocacy and racial socialization, whereas traditional parent engagement was subdivided into school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and academic socialization.

***Critical parent engagement.*** Similar to the current conceptualization of critical action, critical parent engagement represents a form of parent action that is marked by and recognizes

awareness and understanding of how racism is embedded within society and schools and impacts Black students' and parents' lived experiences. Moreover, it takes into consideration the dynamics and influences of race and racism in explaining the experiences of Black families in schools. This form of action resists unjust conditions through constructive social action, whether individual or in a group (Watts et al., 2011) and represents a form of praxis. In my results, I observed that parents who engaged in critical action did so through advocacy in the schools and through racial socialization at home. Praxis is defined as reflection and action in an effort to transform oppressive structures (Freire, 1970) and is exemplified through parents who are acting in a way that is informed by their critical reflection.

Some parents described instances of *advocacy* when they felt there was a situation that required their immediate action. They discussed moments when they were aware of a problem within the school and acted upon it whether due to racist assumptions or treatment, or more general perceptions of mistreatment. For instance, Kimberly, the mother of a daughter who attended Evergreen Middle School, described a time when she had a negative experience at the school. She was explaining three different occasions where her daughter shared experiences that she felt were racist including a Black history discussion on indentured servitude and slavery where her daughter raised her hand to say that slaves were forced, and the teacher asked how she knew that was true. When this occurred, Kimberly stated "I scheduled to meet with her teacher. And then once I met with the teacher and I felt as if it was some racism from the teacher, I met with the principal." Kimberly's actions exemplify not only a knowledge of the school's chain of command, so to speak, but also a racialized CC in that she identified a moment that merited her immediate advocacy.

Parents also described advocacy that was more proactive rather than reactive engagement to address a specific problem. These proactive behaviors are times of engagement by parents, regardless of whether there is a situation or problem that calls for their immediate response. For example, parents who engaged in proactive critical advocacy established relationships with the teachers and administration in schools in order to initiate and build a strong relationship to negate negative perceptions of them as Black parents. Parents also voiced that they engaged in this way in order to get to know and surveil the teacher; this activity also ensured that they could easily access the teacher if needed. For instance, one parent described how she engaged in proactive advocacy which permitted her to witness an event that she deemed as problematic. Trina, who has a son who attended Washington middle school recounts:

> I started just to kind of hang out in the classroom as much as I could… but I'm seeing this whole table of kids acting out and I would hear [my son's] name and his friend's name, and I'm like; how come there's a table of six boys and you just called on the two black boys repeatedly?

Trina recognized something was amiss with the situation she observed in her son's classroom. Her sharing that this was something that she witnessed happening repeatedly may hint that it is a situation she is questioning as not as an individual one time occurrence, but something that has deeper root causes. A CRT analysis could hypothesize that these behaviors exemplify the notion of whiteness as property. Because US schools often reinforce the idea of whiteness as property through its policies and everyday practices, as Black boys, her son and his friend's behaviors were regulated and did not with confirm with what the dominant majority deems "acceptable", therefore making the teacher more attentive to their actions.

Critical engagement also occurred through *racial socialization* at home, the second subtheme within the theme of critical parent engagement. In the previous example with Trina, she linked her school-based advocacy to subsequent discussions with her son, telling him that as a Black boy he is going to be singled out in negative ways more than his white friends. It is well established that Black families racially socialize their children in numerous ways (Hughes et al., 2006). Racial socialization was included as a subtheme within the critical parent engagement theme because messages of parental racial socialization have been found to be associated with parents' critical reflection of inequity (Bañales et al., 2019). Parents' CC may serve as a precursor for preparation for bias messages defined as the messages parents share in order to educate their children about the reality of racial discrimination and prepares youth to respond to racial bias (Hughes et al., 2006) therefore presupposing a level of critical analysis about the permanence of race and racism. Many parents talked about engaging in conversations with their children about how things may be different for them because they are Black. For instance, Rose who is the mother of teenage boy explains how she has told him "I'm only having you read because it's like you don't have an option son. You're black in America, you black out here, you a black man period." She goes on to explain how she tells both her children that they have to work hard and put in effort so that no one has a reason to doubt them or their abilities.

***Traditional parent engagement.*** In addition to engagement with the school that recognizes marginalization, racism, and stereotypes, parents also participated in their children's education in ways that are more traditional. The large majority of parents participated in their children's schools in ways that were encouraged and preferred by the schools such as attending parent school conferences, open houses, and helping their children with homework (Doucet, 2011b; Lareau, 2002). Thus traditional parent engagement included both school-based parent

involvement and home-based parent involvement. Specifically, regarding school-based involvement, parents discussed being active within the schools by attending parent conferences and open houses and having consistent communication between teachers. Home-based involvement represents parents' efforts to educate their children outside of school, such as giving additional school work at home to challenge their child, reading with their child, helping with homework, and monitoring their academic performance and motivation. Eva, the mother of a son who attended Washington Middle School explains how she keeps track of how her son is doing in school by "making sure that I regularly go into the parent portal that the school has to look at his grades and assignments and things like that, so I can…double check behind him."

Another form of traditional parent engagement involved academic socialization messages, or discussions and communication that parents had with their children about academics more broadly that a little less than half of the parents in the sample discussed engaging in. Kimberly, shared that she discusses the importance of higher education with her daughter and how they have already begun thinking about colleges when explaining:

> We've started college tours, you know. She's visited Clark. She's visited Spellman. She's visited FAMU. We've talked about other schools to go visit…so definitely planting that seed, letting her know that after you complete high school, you know, college is now an option.

Although this example of visiting colleges aligns with the traditional definitions of parent involvement, the fact that Kimberly is listing only historically Black colleges may signal a bit of criticality in the way that she is engaging with her daughter's academic future.

**How Parent Beliefs Relate to Action: Across-Case Thematic Analysis**

In order to respond to the last research question and explore how Black parents' critical analysis of educational inequities may influence their engagement, the themes from the cognitive domain and the behavioral domain were analyzed together. As mentioned earlier, there was a group of parents who made both critical and traditional attributions about educational inequities. The nine parents who made both types of attributions also engaged in both types of behaviors—both critical and traditional school engagement. These results suggest that Black parents are engaging in behaviors that all parents do in regard to their children's education but are also having to interact with the schools in a more critical way when they are experiencing or observing any forms of inequity or discrimination or expecting potential race-related problems to occur.

Although two parents did not mention any critical beliefs in their interviews—solely individual attributions—they still engaged in critical behaviors such as advocacy and transmitting messages of racial socialization. For instance, Eleanor who had custody of her granddaughter, solely provided individual reasons for Devin's outcomes in the hypothetical vignette, stating that if "both parents [were present] it would have [made] a difference." However, Eleanor also described a situation when her granddaughter was being picked on by a teacher and she explained to her granddaughter that it could possibly be because of race, an example of preparation for bias messages—a form of racial socialization. In response to what her granddaughter shared, Eleanor went to the school and told the principal, "She deserves an education. She deserves to be in activities and stuff like that and I'm gonna be right behind her a hundred percent." This provides evidence that even when parents did not discuss systemic inequities in interviews their behavior suggests that they still recognize how race plays a factor in their children's education and communicate with schools in order to advocate for their children.

Of the six parents who described themselves as feeling more efficacious, all engaged in both traditional and critical behaviors with their children's schools, except for one who only engaged in behaviors that would be described as more critical. Specifically, parents who expressed that they had knowledge of systems and structures within the school engaged in predominantly more critical behaviors. For instance, of the ten parents who indicated some knowledge of the schools, all discussed moments when they engaged with their children's schools in a more critical way. This suggests that perhaps having knowledge of school structures provides some level of entry for parents to feel able to address instances that they characterize as discriminatory or problematic. In the next section, I provide a snapshot of three parent participants that have differing beliefs about the extent to which race influences their children's experiences in school and what types of ways they described being in contact with the schools.

**Parent Profiles: Within-Case Analysis**

In order to transition from talking about themes independent of parents and their lived experiences, the following section describes how these themes come together using three participants as examples. The first parent, Erika, exemplifies more critical beliefs and behaviors. The second parent, Stacy, is more traditional in her views and actions and does not make mention of racism as a factor that influences the quality of her children's education. Finally, Kelly holds a variety of views and discusses instances of both critical action and times where she is more hands off or behind the scenes in terms of her engagement with her daughters' education.

**Critically conscious and visible.** Erika, who is a senior analyst for a health insurance company in Southeastern Michigan, readily recognized the way that race may influence her 13-years-old son's life and experiences in schools. In discussing recent events in society such as National Football League (NFL) players kneeling to protest the national anthem, Erika engages

in critical discussions about the realities of the world with her son, reflecting both critical cognitions and critical behavior:

> As a parent, I definitely believe in transparency and honesty, even when it's uncomfortable…because I don't feel like we're treated equal. I don't feel like it's justice for all. I'm looking at the news and young black boys are being murdered all over for doing nothing. So as an African-American, young child, I could see how like, to them, I can't protest, as a kid, but if this is something you feel passionate about, then it's okay to take your stand.

Erika also transmits racial socialization messages when she discusses with her son the ways in which race may influence his education. For instance, she shares that she is impressed with a young Black woman who is her son's teacher but notes that there have not been many Black teachers in her son's school and that she would like to see some diversity in the staff. Presumably, her desire for teachers who "match the students" is in response to a feeling or observation that teachers who do not share the same background as their students are unresponsive to cultural differences. She continues on by saying, "I'm not saying that I think that's horrible, but there should be some diversity."

As far as the motivational domain, Erika is knowledgeable about the school, and on many occasions in her interview, demonstrated knowledge of the school system, classroom systems, and chain of command when it comes to engaging with the schools. She describes that that some of her motivation to communicate with her son's teachers is so that he does not go unnoticed, when she shares, "I want to make myself very visible to his teachers, because now we're talking about a larger school, these teachers are going to have a multitude of students, so [he's] not going to be that memorable all the time."

**Colorblind school-based nurturer.** Stacy, the mother of a 13-year-old daughter who attends Central Middle School, works as a hair stylist. She endorsed non-critical or traditional views about society and engages in mainly traditional forms of school engagement. Even when Stacy was prompted about race, she did not identify ways that structural causes affected her lived experiences or those of other Black people in this country. For instance, when discussing the vignette, she made individual attributions for the societal problems mentioned in the hypothetical situation, saying that by Devin "going out there hanging with the wrong crowd and getting in trouble and stealing stuff is his fault, his responsibility." When asked directly if she believes that race influences her daughter's experiences in school, Stacy responded by stating "sometimes it's your home environment" and went on to discuss how although Black people have faced inequity in society, so do other groups such as white people and Mexicans in this country. She further noted that her son's godmother is white, and she encourages her children to be friends with all people. She recounts only observing racism as a teen mother, but largely endorses colorblind beliefs currently and may suggest that she has lower levels of critical reflection.

Stacy engages with the school in very traditional ways such as attending parent teacher conferences and attending field trips as a chaperone. She discusses one instance of advocacy but not in relation to race. Similarly, she explains how she prepares her children for possible danger, but not in the form of preparation for bias messages that recognize race. For instance, she makes sure, "to let them know and be safe and this world is cruel. You get snatched up and I can never see you again" but unlike other parents who mentioned safety concerns, Stacy did not frame her concerns in terms of race.

**Multiple perspective preparer.** Kelly, the mother of a daughter who attended Washington Middle School had a unique perspective. As a biracial woman raising two Black

daughters, she recognized the role of race in her life from a unique vantage point. Because her family included white people, she was aware of the way white people sometimes stereotyped Black people:

> I had a white mom so that was a weird situation…I could see…how white people felt about black people, because I watched it happen in my family…So, I could kind of understand how sometimes like white culture, just culturally doesn't understand something. And they just think it's a race thing, they think it's just who you are.

The quote above exemplifies Kelly's realization that sometimes white Americans in this country make individual attributions are made about Black people when she states, "they think it's just who you are". In addition to this realization, Kelly was also readily able to recognize the influence of race in educational situations. For instance, she was aware of how teacher biases may manifest in her child's education when she stated:

> One of the daggers of being a black parent and wanting your kid to have a really good education…you're going to come up against a teacher, generally a white teacher because there are not a whole lot of black teachers in [that] school system …who doesn't understand your child culturally and they're thinking that the problems your child has are like some sort of deep-seated things.

She continued to describe a time when her daughter was the only Black child in the kindergarten class and her teachers wanted to recommend her for special education because she would not sit still. Kelly and her husband recognized that this "recommendation to special education" was racialized and moved their daughter into a school that had a black principal and had "primarily …strong black female" teachers, whom she believed were able to understand her daughter and better handle the observation that she could not sit still.

When discussing her involvement with her daughters' schools (both middle and high school), she shares how she and her husband are no longer involved like they were when their daughters were younger because "it's almost as if they've watched us do this long enough that they know how to advocate now for themselves." She believes she and her husband "were able to transcend that black image of a parent…our actions have proven if you call us, we're going to call you back; if you email me, I'm going to email you back; if I set up a meeting with you, I'm going to show up." Kelly recognized a racial stereotype and responded to it by ensuring that her and her husband's actions do not strengthen the negative beliefs that school personnel may hold about Black families. Aware of social inequality, she describes that although she and her husband can remain accessible to the teachers and the schools, not all Black parents may be able to do so because they work more than one job, are introverted, or do not feel comfortable talking to the teacher.

## Discussion

Discourse around parental involvement in schools is often riddled with deficit-based narratives about Black parents with no consideration of the way that racism is embedded within that space. In contrast to such deficit-based perspectives, this study sought to explore the ways in which Black parents are involved with their children's schools. Previous research has recognized the ways that Black parents engage with schools and support their children, but these studies have stopped short of simultaneously exploring the ways that parents make sense of structural oppression within schools. CRT as a framework exposes and critiques school practices and policies as both covertly and overtly racist (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). Using this framework centers structural and interpersonal racism in the interviews with parents in order to explore their critical social analysis of racial inequities. By applying CC theory to Black parents and

education, I posit that parents who are more critically analytic of the inequitable social conditions they face act in ways that resist these unjust conditions through social action, or in this instance, their critical engagement in their children's education (Marchand et al., under review; Watts et al., 2011). Results suggest that parents largely hold both types of beliefs—critical and traditional—and engage in both types of actions and that the relationship between beliefs and action are nuanced. Findings also show that feelings of efficacy served as an important intermediary that facilitated parents' engagement.

The ways in which parents observe their interactions with schools from a lens of historical and contemporary racial oppression is an important consideration to better understand what facilitates their beliefs and subsequent action. Results show that parents are thinking about inequities within schools in both critical and non-critical ways. Some parents discussed their understanding of how systemic racism influences their Black children's experiences while some parents discussed the root causes of inequities as being more individual in nature. Rather than these two different types of beliefs representing opposite ends of a spectrum, they may intermix and represent a range on a continuum. This aligns with previous research that has found that people of color make both structural and individual explanations when describing social inequality (Flanagan et al., 2014; Godfrey & Wolf, 2015). These differences may be influenced by the types of inequities parents have experienced first-hand, and those which they only have societal knowledge about (Rowley, Helaire, & Banerjee, 2010).

The commonality of individualized attributions in the data may be due to the prevalence of these types of ideologies in the United States. Americans are exposed to ideologies that highlight work ethic, meritocracy, and beliefs that the world is fair from a young age (Godfrey, Santos, & Burson, 2019; Jost & Hunyady, 2005). For instance, research has shown that both

children and adults blame the victim when thinking about causes of poverty which enables them to justify their negative beliefs about those who are poor (Chafel, 1997). System justification theory serves as a framework to understand the relationship between individuals and their views about the external system within which they operate. This theory posits that people are motivated to support the existing social order (Jost & Thompson, 2000) and that these system-justifying beliefs are believed to be palliative, even for people who are not treated equitably by that very system (e.g., youth of color, people living in poverty). People who endorse system justification beliefs explain social disparities (e.g., racial achievement gaps) and social phenomena (e.g., racial segregation) as naturally occurring (Azevedo, Jost, & Rothmund, 2017). Not only are these individual attributions pervasive, they are also harmful because they perpetuate a myth and ignore the role of institutional racism in producing these observed disparities (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Lewis, 2001). CRT provides a critique of these individual attributions in their notion of critique of liberalism. For instance, notions of colorblindness, neutrality of the law, meritocracy, and equal opportunity seem to be desirable goals however they all fail to consider the permanence and persistence of racism. Further research may help to illuminate why parents might not have a critical view about inequities in education and the consequences of those beliefs.

Parental efficacy played an important role in parents' subsequent behaviors with the schools. Efficacy generally refers to people's belief about their capacity to make change (i.e., internal political efficacy) or their belief that government structures are responsive to their issues (i.e., external political efficacy) (Morrell, 2003). Internal efficacy has been theorized to be a mediator between beliefs and action, such that those who believe they have the ability to make change will more likely engage in critical action (Watts et al., 2011). The results of this study

support these initial findings within the CC literature. Parents' feelings of internal efficacy are an important factor that facilitates the transformation between their critical beliefs into action. However, it was more difficult to disentangle the relationship between external efficacy and critical reflection of societal structures because they are both similar in that they are views about external political structures. Previous research has found that lower levels of external political efficacy, or less of a belief that the government is responsive, is associated with critical reflection of perceived inequality in a sample of Latinx and Black adolescents (Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Flanagan, 2013). Lastly, parents who discussed being knowledgeable about the school system and its structures also discussed being more engaged with their children's schools. Of the ten parents who indicated having some knowledge of the schools, all discussed moments when they engaged with their children's schools in a more critical way. Having this knowledge of how to navigate perhaps enables parents to engage and feel comfortable within the schools and address issues they experience. This ability to navigate may represent a form of cultural capital as Posey-Maddox (2017) posits in her study examining Black fathers' engagement behaviors. She found that fathers who were able to follow the "proper chain of command" (p.588) exhibited cultural capital that enabled them to be included within the school by adhering to preferred dominant norms of engagement which mirrors the property function of whiteness that results in social value and access, and in this case access to the school space.

Nearly all parents in this study discussed instances of home-based or school-based involvement, suggesting that Black parents generally perform these traditional behaviors. However, in addition to behaviors that are performed by parents of all races, Black parents are engaging in actions to ensure that their children are not mistreated and are receiving a fair education. A large body of research has identified the many ways in which Black parents

advocate for their children's education (Allen & White-Smith, 2017, Cooper, 2007; 2009). The results of this study support these previous findings and show that Black parents are engaging in traditional school-based involvement behaviors plus additional actions that are more critical in nature, such as advocacy and racial socialization.

Parent advocacy in this study manifested as parents' discussions of being active participants in their child's education because they perceived that their children might be discriminated against. Parent motivations to advocate for their children often revolved around wanting to protect their children and prepare them for the future. Scholars who study Black parents' choice of homeschooling their children have coined the term "racial protectionism" which refers to Black parents conscious choice to protect their children from school racism (Mazama & Lundy, 2012). It may be that whether or not this racism is seen as interpersonal or structural, parents are proactive and protective of their children. This may explain why some parents who did not endorse critical beliefs were still behaving in critical acts of advocacy—in order to ensure their child is not being mistreated. It may possible that after experiencing an instance that they view as unjust numerous times, they will gain a more sophisticated understanding of structural oppression and realize it is not an isolated instance but something that is more pervasive and systemic. This proposition supports previous research that has documented that there is a complex relationship between the CC components of action and reflection which may be reciprocal or cyclic in nature (Freire, 1970; Watts et al., 2011). For instance action may influence reflection and the opposite may also be true.

A strength of this study is that it examines the psychological aspects through a CC framework that may translate into Black parents' critical engagement such as their cognitions and their feelings of their ability to engage in positive change. This framework posits that critical

action is performed with the goal to change aspects of society such as policies and practices that are perceived to be racist or unjust (Watts et al., 2011). If critical parental engagement is a desirable, valued action that will reduce inequality, understanding pathways to get to that outcome is of empirical importance. These results show that there is not a sole way of thinking about educational inequities that leads to critical parent engagement. It is not just that parents who are less critical engage in only traditional aspects of parent involvement and parents who are more critical in their perceptions are the ones who are disrupting, challenging, and advocating for their children within the school space. Rather there is a mix in the types of beliefs parents hold and actions they engage in. Parents who did not discuss attributing the root causes of educational inequities to systemic racism did still engage in critical parent engagement which suggests that that this outcome can be achieved by parents with varying analyses of systemic inequities. Future inquiry should continue to determine whether parent CC is a necessary precursor to critical action.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

This study provides preliminary evidence that suggests that parents' beliefs and perceptions about educational inequities are related to how they engage with their children's schools. Examining these same questions through quantitative inquiry can help to disentangle how beliefs and actions associate over time and help to answer questions of directionality. Additionally, quantitative inquiry enables scholars to explore how parent beliefs and actions translate into children's outcomes. For instance, a study on the social identity and behaviors of young community organizers of color found that their interest in social justice was partly due to critical values instilled by family in childhood and adolescence (Guessous, 2004). Additionally, research has found moderate sized positive correlations between the structural attributions that

parents make about the racial achievement gap and the frequency with which they send messages of racial pride and preparation for bias (Bañales et al., 2019). Further, transmission of these messages is associated with positive outcomes in youth such as positive ethnic identity, self-esteem, academic and psychosocial outcomes, and ability to cope with discrimination and prejudice (Hughes et al., 2006). Therefore, quantitative data can explore if parents' critical reflection is associated with similar positive outcomes in their children.

It may be uncomfortable for educators and school officials to come to the realization that their practices and policies are racist. CRT theorists recognize that landmark decisions like *Brown v Board of Education* were only made possible through the lens of interest convergence (Bell, 1980; Chapman, 2013). Interest convergence is the idea that support for initiatives and decisions that are beneficial for people of color only emerge when they are also in the best interest of white Americans (Salter & Haugen, 2017). When thinking about how to make schools a more welcoming and just space for Black students and parents, change is made only when it is mutually beneficial for both Black families and schools. However, the responsibility should not lie on Black parents to make these efforts of constantly pointing out racial inequities or moments of prejudice. Rather trainings and workshops can be implemented in order for schools to be able to make these realizations themselves and rectify them before they actualize. Practices can be implemented such as anti-racist professional development for not only teachers but all those employed by public school districts (Ladson-Billings, 2000) especially since parents mentioned interactions with not only teachers but office staff, building security, and other adults within the building. Additionally more can be done throughout teacher training in undergraduate and graduate programs to prepare teachers and understand the inherent racial inequities that are present within the school system and how to best navigate those situations. Research has been

done to simulate a parent teacher conference and allows pre-service teachers to observe their selves on camera so they can reflect, learn about potential things they said and rectify them in order to not perpetuate the feeling of Black parents not feeling welcome within schools (Khasnabis, Goldin, & Ronfeld, 2018). This technique has shown promise for in equipping early teachers with the skills to recognize the lived experiences and influence of systemic racism on education.

## Conclusion

> "It is impossible to democratize schools without opening them up to the real participation of parents and the community in determining the school's destiny."
>
> (Freire, 1993, p. 124)

The above quote captures the importance of ensuring that parents are able to access their children's schools and fully participate within them. It is particularly important for Black parents' voices to be heard and for their engagement to be welcomed, considered, and valued for the benefit of their children's education and Black children as a collective. Considering the deficit perceptions that are prevalent within schools of Black parents, it is imperative to fully understand the ways in which Black parents make sense of these negative perceptions held about themselves and their children and how those thoughts influence their engagement with their children's schools. This demands more thoughtful approaches to partnership and collaboration with Black families that consider barriers, vulnerabilities, and systemic inequity that may impact parent action and child outcomes. Even amidst these obstacles, parents' continued advocacy for their children and critical engagement in schools serve as examples of parents acting as agents of change to disrupt instances of discrimination and marginalization that negatively influence Black children's experiences in schools.

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*Table 3.1. District information based on 2017-2018 NCES Statistics.*

| **District** | **# of students** | **Locale** | **# of schools total** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Walnut Heights | 4883 | Large Suburb | 8 |
| Kendall | 4053 | Rural Fringe | 6 |
| Jackson Hills | 3868 | Large Suburb | 11 |

*Table 3.2. School information based on 2017-2018 NCES Statistics.*

| School | District | # of students | Locale | Title 1 | % FRLP | Grades served | % AA students |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Evergreen | Walnut Heights | 736 | Large Suburb | Yes | 53% | 6 thru 8 | 44% |
| Washington | Kendall | 903 | Rural Fringe | No | 46% | 6 thru 8 | 28% |
| Central | Jackson Hills | 477 | Large Suburb | Yes | 86% | 6 thru 8 | 71% |
| Southridge | Jackson Hills | 488 | Large Suburb | Yes | 80% | 1 thru 8 | 58% |
| Palmer | Jackson Hills | 176 | Large Suburb | No | 41% | 5 thru 8 | 44% |

*Note.* FRLP = free or reduced lunch program. AA = African American.

*Table 3.3. Parent demographics.*

| Parent Name | Gender | Age | Occupation | Child Gender | School Name | District Name |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sheila | Female | 36 | Stay at home mother | Female | Evergreen | Walnut Heights |
| Aisha | Female | 32 | Student | Male | Evergreen | Walnut Heights |
| Rose | Female | -- | Clinical Therapist | Male | Evergreen | Walnut Heights |
| Eleanor | Female | 55 | Substance Abuse Therapist | Female | Evergreen | Walnut Heights |
| Kimberly | Female | 37 | Educator | Female | Evergreen | Walnut Heights |
| Nia | Female | 41 | Education Specialist | Female | Evergreen | Walnut Heights |
| Erika | Female | -- | Senior Analyst | Male | Evergreen | Walnut Heights |
| Eva | Female | -- | Secretary | Male | Washington | Kendall |
| Trina | Female | 47 | Registered Nurse Manager | Male | Washington | Kendall |
| Kelly | Female | 42 | Client Service Coordinator | Female | Washington | Kendall |
| Wendy | Female | 49 | Stay at home mother | Female | Washington | Kendall |
| Amber | Female | 52 | Hair Stylist | Female | Central | Jackson Hills |
| Stacy | Female | 40 | Hair Stylist | Female | Central | Jackson Hills |
| Michelle | Female | 46 | Resident Assistant | Female | Central | Jackson Hills |
| Jennifer | Female | 42 | Patient Service Assistant | Male | Central | Jackson Hills |
| Khadejah | Female | 41 | Home Health Aide | Female | Southridge | Jackson Hills |
| Regina | Female | 43 | Unemployed | Female | Southridge | Jackson Hills |
| Janet | Female | 43 | Stay at home mother | Female Twins | Southridge | Jackson Hills |
| Lisa | Female | 36 | Hardware Store Worker, Student | Male | Southridge | Jackson Hills |
| Rashaad | Male | 38 | Credentialed Trainer | Female | Palmer | Jackson Hills |

*Table 3.4. Themes & Subthemes.*

| Domain | Themes |
|---|---|
| Cognitive/Beliefs | • Critical Reflection:<br>  ○ Parents expressing awareness of the way economic, political, gender, ethnic, and racial conditions influence/limit their or their children's experiences in schools.<br>• Traditional Views:<br>  ○ Parents' views about educational inequity that referred to individual attributions or work ethic. |
| Motivational | • Efficacy<br>  • Internal efficacy:<br>  ○ Parents belief that they were able to successfully contribute/aide in their child's education.<br>  • Knowledge of School:<br>  ○ Parents' discussion of understanding the structures of school—ranging from mention of school choice to understanding school hierarchies.<br>  • External efficacy:<br>  ○ Parents' thoughts about whether external institutions are fair and function in the what they are meant to (e.g., school trust). |
| Action/Behaviors | • Critical Parent Engagement<br>  • Advocacy:<br>  ○ Parents' discussions of being active participants in their child's education that are critical in nature due to parents' perceptions that their children might be discriminated against.<br>  • Racial Socialization:<br>  ○ Messages that parents share with their children about race, either informing them of instances they may face as a Black person or messages of pride in their racial background.<br>• Traditional Parent Engagement<br>  • School-based Involvement:<br>  ○ Parents direct actions with teachers and school personnel at the school site.<br>  • Home-based Involvement:<br>  ○ Examples of ways parents are involved in their child's education at home.<br>  • Academic Socialization:<br>  ○ Messages that parents transmit to their children around their expectations, the utility of school, or discussion of assignments and importance of doing well. |

## Appendix 1: Phone and Email Script

**Phone Script**

Hello *Name of Parent,*
My name is Aixa Marchand and I am a doctoral student at the University of Michigan working under the supervision of Dr. Stephanie Rowley. I received your name and phone number through Dr. Rowley because you participated in her Parenting and African American Stem Success Study (PAASS). Is this a convenient time to talk or is there another time that you would like for me call? I am calling you to invite you to participate in an additional research project. This project is for my dissertation and I am interested in exploring parents' views on society, race, and education as well as involvement with their children's schools. If you are interested in participating, interviews will be conducted at the location of your choosing and will last about 45 minutes. If you would like we can split the interview into two sessions. You will be compensated with a $40 gift card immediately after the interview is completed. If you decide to split the interview you will receive two $20 gift cards amounting to $40. You also have the opportunity to possibly participate in an additional focus group with other parents. Would you be interested in participating?

If yes: Thank you, would you like to schedule a time for that interview now? I can meet you at the location of your choosing.

If no: Thank you for your time. Hope you have a wonderful day.

If I have to leave a message: If you have any questions, please feel free to call me back at 305-807-7782 or email me at admarch@umich.edu. Thank you and have a wonderful night!

**Email Script**

Hello *NAME OF PARENT,*

My name is Aixa Marchand and I am a doctoral student at the University of Michigan working with Dr. Stephanie Rowley and the Parenting and Academic Stem Success Survey (PAASS). I received your name and phone number through Dr. Rowley since you previously participated in her study. I am conducting a research project where I am interested in Black parents' involvement with their children's schools and their past experiences when they were students. I am contacting you because I am seeking to recruit parents to interview that have previously participated in the PAASS project.

The survey asks questions about many aspects of parents' beliefs and actions about race and education. This interview will take about 45 minutes to complete and can be split into two.

The interviews can be conducted at the location of your choosing. The results will be shared with you to both ensure that I capture what you say accurately and to share the results with you. There may also be an opportunity to participate in a focus group with other parents, if you are interested.

To thank you for your time, you will be compensated $40 for your interview. Participation is voluntary so you do not have to answer questions that you don't want to and you can withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

If you are interested in participating or knowing more about the project please feel free to reach out to me via email or by phone.

Best,
Aixa Marchand
Ph.D. Candidate
University of Michigan
admarch@umich.edu
305.807.7782

## Appendix 2: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

| Section 1: Demographics |
|---|

1. Will you please share your participant number?
2. How old is your child who participated in the PAASS project?
3. What school does he or she attend?

| Section 2: Sample Vignette |
|---|

*Devin is a 15-year-old African American male in 9th grade. He lives at home with his mom and three younger siblings. Devin's family doesn't have a lot at home, like computers with the internet. His mom works two jobs and never graduated from high school. Devin changed schools three times during elementary school because his schools were closed due to low enrollment. He gets mostly C's and D's in classes at his high school and doesn't take school very seriously. He doesn't get along well with his teachers and often gets in disagreements with them about his behavior in class. Devin was suspended out of school several times for being disrespectful to his teachers in class. After his third out-of-school suspension, Devin decided to quit going to school altogether and dropped out. Devin has a few friends in his neighborhood who also dropped out of school, and he spends most of his time hanging out with them. Devin got caught breaking into a car with his friends last weekend and got sentenced to a juvenile detention center.*

**Follow up Questions:**

A. I'd like to know why you think Devin's situation is the way it is-

1. What do you think caused Devin's problem?
2. What's **really** at the heart of this problem—what explains it or causes it? [When participants answer, continue asking why their answer is a problem or came about. Continue asking "why" until participants no longer have an answer]
3. How much of this problem is Devin personally responsible for?
4. How much of this problem is due to things happening in Devin's environment—like the school or neighborhood—that are mostly out of Devin's control?
    a. School policies (e.g., related to discipline)
    b. Treatment of teachers (e.g., expectations)
    c. Not enough resources to help with problems
    d. Lack of role models in community
    e. Having a lot of instability at home
5. Of all these explanations, which make the most sense given Devin's situation?
6. Would you say that Devin more or less got what he deserved? Why?

B. What causes you to see this problem the way you do? [Allow participant time to answer]
a. Personal experience?
b. Talking about this issue with others? [Ask where]
c. Knowing someone who has experienced this?
d. Seeing or reading something about this issue? [Ask where]
e. Just based on what you know about the history of this issue?
f. Any current events?

*or*

*Devin is a 15- year old African American male in 9th grade. Devin was suspended out of school several times for being disrespectful to his teachers in class. After his third out-of-school suspension, Devin decided to quit going to school altogether and dropped out.*

**Follow up Questions:**

A. Tell me the story of Devin & how he got here?
B. What about if we consider:
    a. He lives at home with his mom and three younger siblings
    b. His mom works two jobs and never graduated from high school
    c. He was put into Special Ed in 2nd grade and his motivation really decreased at that moment
    d. He doesn't have a good relationship with his teachers
    e. His schools are under resourced and continuously get shut down due to low enrollment so he has gone to three different middle schools
    f. Devin has a few friends in his neighborhood who also dropped out of school, and he spends most of his time hanging out with them
C. Can you offer any additional explanations of what happened to Devin?

Section 3: Past & Current Experiences

4. Where were you born?
    a. **If grew up in the area their children's school is located- How have you seen the area change throughout your lifetime?
5. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
6. What were your past experiences in school when you were growing up?
    a. PROBE: Can you think of any one particular experience that has stayed with you since?
7. Were your parents involved with your schooling when you were a child? If so, in what ways?
    b. PROBE: Can you think of a particular experience when your parents expressed the importance of education or were directly involved with your school?
8. Describe your child's current school?
    c. How do you feel about it?
    d. Do you believe your child is getting a good education there?
    e. Do you have any issues with your child's school?

9. Do you talk to your child about social issues (e.g., such as gender/racial/religious/sexual orientation inequality, poverty, etc.) or what is happening in the news? What about social issues that affect your family or your community?
    f. If yes, how do you talk to your child about these?
    g. If yes, why do you talk to your child about these issues?
10. Do you believe that race influences your children's school experiences/academic outcomes?
    h. PROBE: Can you think of a particular instance when you have seen race influence your child's experience?
11. What are your academic hopes for your child?

## Section 4: School Involvement

12. When you initially think about parent involvement in schools what comes to mind?
13. What kind of things do you do to help your child in school? At school? At home?
14. What does it mean for you to be involved in your child's education/school?
    a. [If responds as involved] What are some of the underlying reasons/motivations why you chose to engage with your child's school?
15. Has your involvement shifted over the years?
    b. For example, were you involved in different ways when your child was in elementary school?
    c. How do you envision it changing as you child moves into high school?
16. Have you felt like you have been provided enough opportunities to get involved at your child's school?
17. What kind of involvement seems more valued there? Who is doing that type of involvement?
18. How do you think teachers and staff view your son/daughter? Your family? Your community?
    d. Have you ever felt discriminated against/viewed differently?

## Section 5: Current Local Event- Farmington Hills Student

19. What is your initial reaction/what was your initial reaction when you heard about this news story?
20. In your opinion, what is the reason that this situation happened?
21. What would you do if Brian Chaney were your child?

**Appendix 3: Overview Worksheet**

Interview Read through worksheet

RA:

___ Date:

Participant #: ____Cognitive

1. Critical Reflection (structural attributions)

About Society? Yes or No

About Schools? Yes or No

Line # Explanation

Line # Explanation

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
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2. Traditional Views (individual attributions)

About Society? Yes or No About Schools? Yes or No

Line # Explanation

Line # Explanation

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|---|---|---|---|
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| | | | |

**Motivational**

1. Beliefs and Values

Race, bias, any? Yes or No

School Traditional? Yes or No

Line # Explanation

Line # Explanation

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
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| | | | |
| | | | |

2. Personal Motivation

Critical? Yes or No

Traditional? Yes or No

Line # Explanation

Line # Explanation

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3. Influence of Past

Critical? Yes or No

Traditional? Yes or No

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Line # Explanation

Line # Explanation

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4. Efficacy

Internal? Yes or No

Knowledge of school? Yes or No

Line # Explanation

Line # Explanation

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| | | | |

Traits exemplified Knowledge shown at home? Yes or No

Line # Explanation

Line # Explanation

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|---|---|---|---|
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External? Yes or No

Critical? Yes or No

Line # Explanation

Line # Explanation

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|---|---|---|---|
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| | | | |

5. Role Construction (e.g., identities)

Protector? Yes or No

Inquirer? Yes or No

Line # Explanation

Line # Explanation

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|---|---|---|---|
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Role Model? Yes or No
Nurturer? Yes or No
Line # Explanation

| Line # | Explanation | Line # | Explanation |
|---|---|---|---|
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Preparer? (for independence) Yes or No
Line # Explanation

| Line # | Explanation | Line # | Explanation |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

Critical Parent Engagement
Racial Socialization? Yes or No Situational
Advocacy @ School? Yes or No
Line # Explanation

| Line # | Explanation | Line # | Explanation |
|---|---|---|---|
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| | | | |
| | | | |

Critical Action @ Home? Yes or No
Continuous Advocacy @ School? Yes or No
Line # Explanation

| Line # | Explanation | Line # | Explanation |
|---|---|---|---|
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| | | | |
| | | | |

Traditional Parent Involvement
Academic Socialization? Yes or No
School-based Involvement? Yes or No
Line # Explanation

| Line # | Explanation | Line # | Explanation |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Home-based involvement? Yes or No
Line # Explanation

| Line # | Explanation | Line # | Explanation |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |

SUMMARY OF THOUGHTS

Critically Conscious: Yes or No Evidence: line #

Definition: awareness and reflection of the way economic, political, gender, ethnic, and racial conditions influence/limit people's beliefs, behavior, and experiences.

Efficacy: High or low | Action: Critical or non-critical | Example of action: summary & line #

Summary of thoughts per domain:

| |
|---|
| Cognitive: |
| |
| Motivational: |
| |
| Behavioral: |
| |

## Chapter 4: Development and Validation of the Black Parent Critical Consciousness Scale

The ways in which Black parents view the public school system may inform their engagement with their children's schools. This manuscript details the development and validation of a novel scale of Black parents' beliefs, motivations, and actions in regard to their children's education. This measure contributes to the literature and measurement of critical consciousness (CC) and parent engagement by focusing on Black parents' school-related beliefs and behaviors. Given the positive impact that CC has shown in youth samples (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016; O'Connor, 1997; Rogers et al., 2012), parental CC may also be positively associated with the ways that they choose to engage with their children's schools. Parents who have experienced firsthand, or are aware of structural barriers, societal inequities, and racialized gaps, may more likely be critical in their analysis of those issues. This proposition will be explored through the creation of a Black parent CC scale that will assess parents' analysis of inequities present in the educational system and whether they make more individualized or structural explanations of these issues. This measure is intended to capture parents' read of the world regarding structures of power and oppression and to explore how this worldview may influence their feelings of self-efficacy and the ways in which they critically act on behalf of their children within schools.

### Historical and Contemporary Conceptualizations of Critical Consciousness

CC is defined as the critical analysis of social conditions and the actions taken to rectify these perceived social inequities (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011). The notion of CC was first theorized by Paulo Freire (1993) as a pedagogical tool to help Brazilian rural farmers better

understand the oppressive social structures they were living within. Freire believed that literacy and a critical understanding of these inequitable social conditions would create the capacity for individuals to act to change the inequitable conditions they observed.

More contemporary scholarship on CC has led to the conceptualization of various components, including critical reflection, critical motivation, and critical action. Critical reflection is comprised of two subcomponents, including perceived inequality, which is thought to be the critical analysis of social inequalities that can be racial/ethnic, gendered, or socioeconomic in nature, and egalitarianism, which is the endorsement of societal equality (Diemer, Rapa, Park, & Perry, 2017). Critical motivation refers to an individuals' perception that they can produce social change (Diemer, McWhirter, Ozer, & Rapa, 2015). Finally, critical action is defined as the action that is taken either individually or collectively to enact positive change in society. Examples of such action include voting, community organizing, contacting political officials, and protesting (Watts et al., 2011). The contemporary conceptualization of CC serves as the framework for the development of the current measure.

CC has typically been studied in youth samples and has been shown to associate with youths' developmental outcomes, such as civic action, mental health, educational attainment, and academic achievement (Carter, 2008; Diemer, Rapa, Voight, & McWhirter, 2016; O'Connor, 1997). For instance, a qualitative study with six Black students who were aware of how race, class, and gender operate and may limit their future opportunities, found that these students were high achieving and optimistic about their future even while being critical about how their position within society might be limited by systemic influences (O'Connor, 1997). Further, their knowledge of a collective struggle in their shared identity as African American was related to an increased sense of agency and increased academic motivation. This recognition was connected to

their perception of collective action as a way to resist and counteract oppression and injustice and their ability to see Black people as agents of change both individually and within a group (O'Connor, 1997).

Although CC has mostly been studied in youth populations most recently, I argue that the CC model can be extended to adult populations. The original scholarship that laid the foundation for contemporary conceptualizations of CC was work that Paulo Freire conducted with groups of Brazilian rural farmers in the 1960s. Freire witnessed Brazilians who were suffering from poverty and hunger and wanted to empower those who he saw through education and critical literacy, or a way of empowering people by teaching them to understand that their reality and oppression can be changed (Freire, 1993). In this paper, I develop a model of CC relevant to parents and their engagement with their children's schools. Parental CC may relate to the ways that parents decide to engage with their children's schools and potentially their children's academic and CC outcomes as well. For instance, in O'Connor's study students that she found were race and class conscious expressed witnessing family members, teachers, and other adults participate in collective action and challenge the status quo to combat injustice or inequality. Therefore, having influential adults who express higher levels of CC either by their messages of a collective struggle or their expression of human agency, may be connected to children's positive outcomes and characteristics. In addition to parents levels of CC, parental messages of racial socialization, defined as those that parents transmit to their children about the importance of race, racism, and racial disparities is another important concept when considering parental processes that are related to youth academic and sociopolitical outcomes.

**Racial Socialization as a Related Construct**

A concept that is theoretically related to CC is parental racial socialization (Anyiwo,

Bañales, Rowley, Watkins, & Richards-Schuster, 2018; Bañales, Marchand, Skinner, Anyiwo, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2019). Prior research has shown that Black parents' experiences of racism as well as their social class are related to several aspects of their racial socialization practices—the messages and behaviors that parents transmit to their children about race (Carter, 2008; Doucet, Banerjee, & Parade, 2016; Hughes et al., 2006). For example, parents who discuss experiences of discrimination or other barriers they face with their children engage in preparation for bias. Preparation for bias is a specific type of racial socialization message that is defined as parents' discussion of discrimination with their children while also providing coping strategies to deal with possible future biases (Hughes et al., 2006). Parents' messages of preparation for bias, by definition, suggest that parents are aware of structural determinants of inequity and discrimination and are preparing their children for future experiences with such situations.

Flanagan (2013) argues that racial socialization is a form of political socialization in that these messages not only are racial in tone, but also teach Black youth how to interact with the larger political system. Parents who transmit these types of messages can be thought of as having a CC of society that they are in turn informing their children about. For example, Ward (1991) asserted that Black parents' use of preparation for bias messages are rooted in the historical experiences of oppression that Black people face in the United States. For instance, Black parents who have regular contact with the ethnic-majority culture are more likely to transmit messages of preparation for bias with their children because they may more easily observe and personally experience inequities and instances of discrimination (Hughes et al., 2006; Mandara, Gaylord-Harden, Richards, & Ragsdale, 2009). Flanagan (2013) asserts that this awareness of discrimination is related to a "political consciousness and a skepticism about the terms of the social contract" (p. 76)—referred to as the "collective decisions of individuals to live together in

a society" (p. 10) that form a group of citizens and ensures security and welfare for those within that society. Individuals' experiences with institutions such as schools, community organizations, and governmental entities may mediate views of the social contract and whether it is upheld. Therefore, Black parents who engage in this type of socialization may be more aware of prejudice and discrimination in the school system, or in other words, have higher levels of critical reflection.

In addition to parents' experiences of discrimination that may influence their critical reflection, their memories of their own school experiences may influence their tendency to engage with their children's schools or their critical motivation. Parents who may be skeptical or wary of the school context, due to their own negative experiences within schools, may feel ill equipped to engage with their children's schools and feel less confident in those interactions (Lareau, 2002) therefore linking their critical reflection to critical motivation. For example, Lareau and Horvat (1999) found that Black parents' previous experiences influenced how they thought their children's schools would also treat them. They were concerned that their perspectives would not be respected because of their race or that the school would be unresponsive to their opinions and suggestions (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Conversely, Black parents who have had these negative experiences but view them as structural in nature may feel compelled to engage with schools in an effort to ensure their child is not the victim of such racialized bias. For instance, having an awareness of systemic racism may serve as a remedy for such oppression (Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999). Therefore, parents who are able to make attributions to structures and discriminatory policies may be less likely to feel personally affected and may want to prepare their children for the possibility they will experience those instances as well.

**The Current Study**

Table 4.1 visually depicts how this measure of parental CC aligns to current conceptualizations of the theory and how these dimensions are measured. Assessing parents' analysis of societal and educational inequities is meant to represent their critical reflection. Items that assess the ways in which parents construct their role as advocates for their children and their beliefs about their self-efficacy represent parents' critical motivation to engage with their children's schools. Lastly, I have developed items that assess parents' critical parent engagement as a form of their critical action. The inclusion of action items that are specific to parent engagement behaviors is novel. Current types of actions that are measured in CC scales include working on a political campaign, joining in a protest march, or contacting a public official, etc., and are not specific to parents or schools. More importantly, the items developed to capture critical parent engagement were written to reflect parents' awareness and understanding of racial inequity. Current measures of parent involvement do not account for the influences of race and racism in explaining Black parent engagement in schools and represent a narrow view of what constitutes involvement often leading to misrepresentation of how Black parents are involved in their children's schools. For instance, many current measures of school-based involvement do not take into consideration the barriers that Black parents may face or alternate ways that they may advocate for their children's education whether tangible like the inability to take time off of work to attend school-based events (Finders & Lewis, 1994) or psychological barriers like preparing themselves for potential discrimination (Johnson, 2015).

This paper describes the creation and validation of the Critical Parent Engagement Scale (CPES). It has not been until recently that youth CC has been well measured (Diemer et al., 2015), and there is no instrument as of yet that explicitly measures CC in adults or specifically in

parent samples. The first study outlines the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) conducted to explore the reliability and factor structure of the scale. In Study 2, I describe the confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) I conducted on an independent sample of participants to determine if the factor structure I attained in the EFA is replicable. The creation of the CPES instrument can lead to further understanding possible precursors and motivations to parents' engagement with their children's schools and shed light on parents' perceptions about social institutions such as schools. In the future, a measure of parental CC may be used to see if it correlates or predicts their children's development of CC or their academic outcomes. Tests of convergent and divergent validity will also be conducted to examine how this CPES associates with other constructs.

## Method

### Item Pool

DeVellis (2012) suggests that the first step of measure construction is to generate a variety of items for an initial item pool. Therefore, various items that have been developed to measure youth CC were adapted to capture parental perspectives. The initial item pool was comprised of items from measures of youth CC and political engagement, including the sixth wave of the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study, the Critical Consciousness Inventory (CCI; Thomas et al., 2014), the Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS; Diemer et al., 2017), Contemporary Critical Consciousness Measure (CCCM; Shin, Ezeofor, Smith, Welch, & Goodrich, 2016), and work by Baker and Brookins (2014) (see Table 4.2). Many of the items from these sources were adapted. For instance, instead of "certain racial or ethnic groups have fewer chances to get a good high school education" was changed to "Black Americans have fewer chances to get a good high school education."

In addition to these items, themes from parental interviews were used to inform the creation of new items. Previous qualitative inquiry has found that Black parents refer to their awareness of racial inequities in schools when discussing their school engagement (Marchand, Settles, Rowley, & Diemer, in prep). For instance, parents mentioned knowing that school officials may believe that Black parents are less interested in their children's education than white parents. Knowing that they might be stereotyped, Black parents described introducing themselves to the teacher first in order to dispel that potential belief. That qualitative finding led to the creation of the following item, "I participate actively in my child's education so that teachers know that I am interested in my child's education." DeVellis (2012) advises that when writing new items to keep focused on the relevant construct that is being measured. Items were written to be "clear, concise, readable, distinct, and reflect the scale's purpose (e.g., produce responses that can be scored in a meaningful way in relation to the construct definition)" (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006, p. 813). Items were written at a Flesh Kincaid reading level of 7.7 to ensure that items are easily read and understood by participants.

Feedback was received on the measure in numerous ways. The initial set of items were sent to four experts in the field for feedback. With their feedback item wording was edited or items were removed. The set of items were presented for feedback to two research groups that included professors and graduate students with expertise in related areas. Items were also piloted by fellow graduate students who were asked to review the items for readability, provide comments about if each item measured the intended constructs, and make any further revisions or suggestions. The final list of items was revised and finalized by the first author. Response options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a 6-point Likert type scale were added to each item.

**Sampling Strategy**

Researchers have suggested that there should be about five to ten participants per item for the purposes of instrument validation, so the necessary sample size is determined by the number of items proposed (DeVellis, 2012). With 59 items in the proposed scale, a sample of 295-590 participants is necessary. In order to obtain a diverse sample of Black parents an online crowdsourcing site was used for data collection.

MTurk is an Internet marketplace that allows individuals to log in and complete a job (or survey) in exchange for monetary compensation (Schleider & Weisz, 2015). MTurk is an increasingly popular method researchers are utilizing to recruit and collect data online. This online platform provides "easy access to a large, stable, and diverse subject pool" (Mason & Suri, 2012, p.1). Further, a large advantage of using MTurk is the ease with which one can collect large-scale data at a relatively low cost. Incentives are built in to ensure that participants (or workers as they are referred to on MTurk) provide high quality data. Participants' "reputation" of completing tasks or questionnaires carefully and honestly helps determine if they are asked to complete further work in the future (Mason & Suri, 2012; Schleider & Weisz, 2015).

Schleider and Weisz (2015) found that MTurk was much more affordable, had comparable attrition to traditional data collection methods, and had similar bias in the inclusion of participants' race/ethnicity and enrollment of single parents in comparison to traditional longitudinal methods of data collection. They concluded that MTurk is a viable tool for conducting research, that allows for rapid collection of high-quality parent data at a low cost (Schleider & Weisz, 2015). Research on the effectiveness of MTurk has found that participants

are slightly more diverse than typical internet samples and come from all 50 states (Burhmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011).

MTurk was not created particularly for research purposes, so therefore TurkPrime was developed to introduce a user-friendly interface (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2017). This crowdsourcing site is similar in that users log into the platform from a browser in order to complete a task, in this instance, a research survey. In order to use TurkPrime, an account with MTurk must already exist. Other than the user interface, TurkPrime is nearly identical to MTurk, and TurkPrime enables researchers to fully utilize the features of MTurk.

Although there are studies that praise MTurk as a reliable method, due to its novelty and widespread use, there are also studies that suggest the contrary and that this technique produces data that are poor in quality. Recent research has found that MTurk participants can create a false identity which results in data that are misrepresented and have little correspondence to the responses from appropriately identified participants (Wessling, Huber, & Netzer, 2017). A short-term suggestion of how to remedy such problems includes creating an initial survey where participants can identify certain demographics that is not tied to the study in hopes that they will answer honestly with no motive to answer in a deceitful way to be eligible for participation in the larger study. A long-term suggestion includes creating an MTurk participant pool or panel that continuously classifies and collects information on potential participants, thus enabling participants who misrepresent themselves to be eliminated from the study (Wessling, Huber, & Netzer, 2017).

To ensure data quality, initial messages were sent to a TurkPrime account manager requesting only participants who self-identify as Black parents. Mason and Suri (2012) advise researchers to include questions that have verifiable answers, such as directives (e.g., “Circle the

4") or simple math problems (e.g., "What is 2 + 2) and to inform participants that they will not be paid unless they answer those questions correctly. The incorporation of this type of question will ensure that participants are paying attention throughout the survey and that it is an actual human being participating and not a program or "bot" (Mason & Suri, 2012). In this survey, five attention checks were included requesting that participants click on a specific response identified, in order to gauge attention. Parents who did not finish the survey in full were excluded.

**Analysis Plan**

Factor analysis is an essential tool when developing and validating a scale. In order to conduct a factor analysis, it is best practice to conduct an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and then a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with the same set of items using two separate sample of participants (DeVellis, 2012; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). These steps first provide the framework for researchers to define meanings of proposed factors, and secondly allow for analyses of how these proposed factors relate to one another and collectively measure the scale. Factor analysis is one part science and one part art, meaning that this process is a mix of both empirical and subjective decisions that need to be made to finalize a solution that makes sense. Lastly, tests of convergent and divergent validity will be carried out to explore the relationship between the proposed scale of parental CC and established measures that are either conceptually similar or different to provide further evidence of the strength of this scale. Convergent validity is established when two theoretically similar constructs correlate with one another, whereas discriminant validity is established when two conceptually different constructs that are easily differentiated evidenced by a negative correlation.

Using MPlus Version 7.3, results for different numbers of factor solutions will be requested and fit indices will be used to compare and find the best fitting factor model. Additionally, scree plots and eigenvalues will be used to determine how many factors to retain. Items will be removed that either cross-load within .15 on two factors or have loadings below .40 as item deletion is an expected part of the process (Diemer et al., 2017: Worthington & Whitaker, 2006). Item stems will be reviewed in order to determine whether a set of items "make sense" to be grouped with other items that the EFA suggests. In addition to analyzing cross loading and model fit indices provided by MPlus, internal consistency of the hypothesized factors will be analyzed using Cronbach's alpha and inter-item correlations.

## Results

### Study 1: Exploratory Factor Analysis

**Participants.** The sample for study 1 comprised 306 self-identified Black parents, with more female ($N$ = 184) than male ($N$ = 122) respondents. All participants identified as Black. When probed further 300 (98%) of participants identified as African American/Black, 5 (1.6%) identified as multi-racial, and 1 participant further specified as identifying as another ethnicity. Participants ranged from 18 to 69 years old, with a mean of 35.61 ($SD$ = 10.43). Participants responded to their education level by indicating their highest level of education. About a quarter (25.5%) of parents indicated they finished some high school or had a high school diploma, 48.7% indicated some college or a technical, trade, or associate's degree, 17% had a bachelor's degree, and 8.5% indicated having some graduate school, a Master's degree, or a PhD, MD, or JD. Fifty one percent of parents identified as being single, with 16.7% ($N$ = 51) of that percentage indicating that they are single but living with a partner. An additional 37.6% of parents reported being married and 11.1% indicated that they were either divorced, separated, or

widowed. The vast majority of parents identified as African American (91.2%) whereas there were smaller percentages of parents who identified as Afro-Caribbean (4.9%), African (1.3%), and other (2.3%).

**Results.** In order to test whether the relationship among the 59 items was strong enough to conduct factor analyses, I conducted a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity in SPSS (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). The KMO tests how suited a set of data is for factor analysis by reporting a proportion of variance among variables that might be common variance. The Bartlett's test is used to detect if the intercorrelation matrix is an identity matrix, checking if there is redundancy between variables that can be summarized within factors. The KMO value was .88 (acceptable values are above .60) and the Bartlett's test was significant ($p < .001$). Since the data passed the tests of sampling adequacy, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using MPlus Version 7.3 (Muthen & Muthen, 2014). A promax oblique rotational method was chosen because the hypothesized factors are thought to be correlated based on previous theory (Marchand, Vassar, Diemer, & Rowley, under review; Watts et al., 2011). The amount of missing data was minor and ranged from full coverage to 1% missingness. Even with a negligible amount of missingness, data were analyzed using Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML), which uses all existing data points instead of removing cases based on patterns of missingness (Muthen & Muthen, 2014).

With a large number of items, in the initial run, factor solutions for one to fifteen factors were requested. Factor solutions above 10 did not converge. Therefore, in the next iteration of analyses I requested solutions for one to 10 factors. A factor solution was chosen based on Kaiser's criterion which suggests retaining factors that have eigenvalues over one. Other criteria that were considered were model fit indices, interpretability of factors solutions obtained, and

internal consistency of items within each factor. Using the eigenvalues and model indices provided, a ten-factor solution evinced to be the best fitting. The fit statistics for the ten-factor solution were a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value = .04 and Root Mean Square Residual (RMSR) value = .03, with RMSEA values below .06 considered to be very good and RMSR values below .08 as very good (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Next, the factor loadings provided were used to inform the retention or removal of items (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). The criteria that followed for item removal or retention were the following three points: 1) items must load onto a factor that has at least two other items, 2) they must not significantly cross-load within a range of .15 onto two factors, and 3) and they must load at .40 or above. When analyzing the factor loadings for the ten-factor solution, six items loaded onto a factor that only had two items and eight items either did not load at above .40 or cross loaded. Therefore 14 items would have to be removed according to the criteria above. The remaining items grouped into six factors that had more than 3 items.

In order to have a parsimonious factor solution, I next compared the six-factor solution to the ten-factor solution. An increased number of factors will almost always have a better fit because more variance is explained, so it is important to keep that into consideration when finalizing a factor structure. Model fit indices suggested that the six-factor solution was also a good fit of the data: RMSEA = .05 and the RMSR = .04. The factors consisted of items very similar to those of the ten-factor solution and made substantive sense. Only six items either in the six factor solution would need to be removed based on the inclusion criteria. Therefore, a six-factor solution was retained. The factors that evinced were conceptually meaningful factors that reflect themes previously found (Marchand, Settles, Rowley, & Diemer, in prep. The six factors were: 1) structural attributions (15 items) or parents' perceptions that inequities are caused in

part by systemic factors, institutional racism, etc., 2) group participation (4 items) or parents' participation in formal and informal groups for the benefit of their children's education, 3) internal efficacy (16 items) or parents' belief about their ability to make change, 4) racial socialization (5 items) or the messages parents transmit to children about being Black, 5) individual attributions (5 items) parents' beliefs that educational inequities are caused by individual factors, and 6) school-based engagement (8 items) or the actions that parents engage in at the school site. Table 4.3 displays which items belong to which of the six aforementioned factors (see Table 4.4 for descriptive statistics).

The EFA was also used to inform which items should be kept and which should be removed at this step. The six items that did not load on any factor above .40 were items 25, 35, 37, 41, 45, and 59. Additionally, some items were redundant as evinced by a bivariate correlation of above .70. Those items were 2 and 3 ($r = .72$, $p < .001$), 3 and 4 ($r = .71$, $p < .001$), 43 and 44 ($r = .74$, $p < .001$), 44 and 51 ($r = .71$, $p < .001$), and 53 and 54 ($r = .72$, $p < .001$). One item from each pair were removed in order to streamline the scale. Decisions about which to retain and remove were made by examining both and keeping the item that substantively represented the shared idea of both items best. Those items were 2, 4, 43, 51, and 53.

Alpha reliability coefficients and inter-item correlations suggested that the six factors were internally consistent (see Table 4.4). In addition to Cronbach's alpha, inter-item correlations (IIC) are included as they are not biased by the number of items in each factor. The six factors associated with each other in ways that were both expected and unexpected. For instance, individual attributions and structural attributions would be hypothesized to not be related or if related, be so in a negative manner, but they were correlated at $r = .36$, $p < .001$. Items representing actions such as parent group participation and school-based engagement were

hypothesized to be related and were, $r = .12$, $p < .05$ (see Table 4.5). The results of study 1 provided initial support for the reliability and validity of this scale to adequately measure parental CC.

**Study 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

**Participants.** The sample for study 2 comprised 348 self-identified Black parents ranging from 18-76 years of age ($M = 34.62$, $SD = 10.62$). Of the 348, 103 (29.6%) identified as male and 243 (69.8%) identified as female. The majority of parents indicated that they had less than a college degree or completed some college (72.8%) with an additional 19% indicated they had a bachelor's degree, and 7.1% indicated that they had completed some graduate school or had attained a graduate degree. As far as marital status, 34.2% of parents responded that they were single, 18.1% that they were single and living with a partner, 34.2% stated they were married, and 12.8% responded they were divorced, separated, or widowed. The vast majority of parents in this sample identified as African American (92.5%) whereas there were much smaller percentages of parents who identified as Afro-Caribbean (1.7%), African (1.1%).

**Results.** After completing the EFA in study 1, the next step of analyses was to conduct a CFA to confirm the proposed factor structure. Worthington and Whitaker (2006) caution that a "key validity issue is the replication of the hypothesized factor structure using a new sample" (p. 815). Therefore, they suggest the most logical approach is to conduct the EFA before the CFA. These analyses were carried out on a separate sample of parents in order to ensure that these patterns are not unique to a specific set of participants but rather "hang together" with a different group of respondents as well. The CFA serves as a more rigorous test of factor structure, which restricts each item to only load on one factor (Muthen & Muthen, 2014). In addition to using fit indices such as RMSEA, CFI, TLI, and SRMR to determine if the data were a good fit,

modification indices will be reviewed to determine if any suggestions of error covariances are present. The use of modification indices will provide a sense of how the fit of the CFA may improve with the inclusion of additional parameters. Before including suggested parameters, it is important to review if correlating the error variances between items makes theoretical sense with the theoretical framing of parental CC. No items were skewed or kurtotic to the extent that merited transformation, but due to moderately high values the MLR estimator was used.

The six-factor model that was obtained in the EFA was not replicated in the CFA using a separate sample of Black parents. The initial CFA was not a good fit of the data RMSEA = .059, CFI = .828, TLI = .818, SRMR = .082 (note that different fit statistics are reported by MPLUS for CFA than from an EFA). The generally acceptable cutoffs for good fit statistics according to the literature are as follows: equal to or below .05 for RMSEA, equal to or above .95 for CFI and TLI, and below .06 for SRMR (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2015).

To obtain a better fitting model and shorten the scale, a more conservative threshold of cross loadings was applied. Items that had cross loaded within a range of .20 at the EFA stage were identified and removed from the Study 2 analyses. Item 28 and 36 loaded on the efficacy construct and the school engagement construct and item 13 loaded comparably on to the individual attributions and structural attributions construct, therefore those three items were removed. Modification indices indicated that error covariances between some items should be correlated and that certain items no longer loaded strongly on to certain constructs. Four pairs of items that the modification indices suggested shared error covariance also had a bivariate correlation of above .70. Those items were 1 and 3 ($r$ = .71, $p$ < .001), 9 and 10 ($r$ = .73, $p$ < .001), 11 and 12 ($r$ = .72, $p$ < .001), and 22 and 32 ($r$ = .75, $p$ < .001). One item from each pair was removed in order to streamline the scale. Those items were 1, 9, 11, and 33 and similar to

what was done at the EFA, the item that was retained was the one that better represented the idea the pair of items represented. Two items loaded below .50 which is a more conservative threshold than the .40 that was my initial a priori criteria, which was adjusted in an effort to streamline the measure and remove weaker functioning items. Item 27 and item 42 were removed because of their loading of .50 and .45, respectively. Modification indices are sometimes used to either add or drop parameters throughout the process of model re-specification (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). The modification indices suggested that some items that initially belonged to one factor would also measure a separate factor well. Those items are 21, 40, 44, 47, 49, and 58. Two of those items comprised the racial socialization construct so therefore the whole construct was removed in addition to items 21, 40, 47, and 49. Reasons for each item removal can be found in Table 4.6.

With the items that either were redundant or had evidence of cross loading removed, the remaining scale consisted of 32 items. Five pairs of error covariances were estimated between items 5 and 15, 22 and 26, 24 and 26, 28 and 30, and 55 and 56. The results of the CFA with these items was RMSEA = .05, CFI = .93, TLI = .92, and SRMR = .07. The descriptive statistics for each of the factors can be found in Table 4.7. The remaining five factors were internally consistent as reflected by both Cronbach's alpha and inter-item correlations (see Table 4.7) and the correlations between factors can be found in Table 4.8. Table 4.9 provides the standardized factor loadings and standard errors for each item as it corresponds to one of the five remaining constructs. All variables significantly loaded onto the same factor in the CFA as it had at the EFA with standardized loadings all above .50.

**Post Hoc Analyses.**

The two samples, although alike in demographics like education, marital status, and age,

differed in terms of gender. There were 11% more women in the CFA sample. This may account for some potential differences in some of the outcomes. For instance differences in the fit of the EFA and CFA may reflect the differing gender composition of the two samples. To test this possibility, a MIMIC (multiple indicators multiple causes) model was run. The MIMIC model resulted in a slightly better fitting model than the CFA and indicated that group participation differed by gender suggesting that men endorsed those items more strongly ($\beta$ = -.17, $p$ = .002).

Psychometricians caution against making revisions to the scale between the conclusion of the EFA and the start of the CFA (Worthington & Whitaker, 2006). In order to shorten the scale many items were removed at this phase due to higher correlations with one another suggesting redundancy or due to stricter criteria for cross-loading (i.e., within a difference of .15 between factors to a difference of .20 between factors). Worthington and Whitaker suggest that if optimizing scale length, it is necessary to rerun the EFA in order to ensure that the items removed to no result in changes to the factor structure and that all originally established criteria are still met (2006). In order to ensure that the 32-item scale finalized at the CFA stage did not drastically differ from the factor structure determined at the EFA, an EFA was run with the 32 items and the parent sample from the EFA study. This analysis resulted in a 5-factor solution that fit the data well (RMSEA = .043, RMSR = .032) that confirmed the five factors from the from the CFA study. This provides further evidence that the 5-factor structure fits the data and represents the measure best.

**Validity**. There is preliminary evidence to suggest that the CPES is a valid measure of Black parents' CC through analyses of convergent and divergent validity. Divergent validity (sometimes referred to as discriminant validity) provides evidence to what the proposed measure of parental CC is not related. In other words, constructs that are theoretically different are

included to ensure that there no is little, no, or a negative correlation between the proposed measure and those that are conceptualized as unrelated (DeVellis, 2012). Measures of social dominance orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth & Malle, 1994) were included to determine divergent validity. Endorsement of such items are hypothesized to negatively correlate with critical reflection, especially the egalitarianism component, in other studies (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer et al., 2017). There was a small negative relationship ($r$ = -.12, $p$ = .03) between the structural attributions factor and the social dominance orientation scale (SDOS) which does support previous research (see Table 4.10). However, the individual attributions factor was positively correlated with scores on the SDOS ($r$ = .34, $p$ < .001), providing some evidence of convergent validity. Additionally, the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) was included in data collection to determine divergent validity. This scale is comprised of three subscales: unawareness of racial privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racial issues. Structural attributions were negatively correlated with both the racial privilege subscale ($r$ = -.44, $p$ < .001) and total score of the COBRAS ($r$ = -.23, $p$ < .001) which has been found to be related to greater levels of racial prejudice and stronger belief that society is fair and just (Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000).

Conversely, convergent validity provides evidence that theoretically related constructs are similar (DeVellis, 2012). Black parents' CC is hypothesized to be related to aspects of their racial identity including centrality, regard, and ideology. Subscales of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) were related to factors of the CPES. For instance, centrality or the importance that individuals put on being Black was positively correlated with structural attributions ($r$ = .43, $p$ < .001) and efficacy ($r$ = .36, $p$ < .001). Similarly, components of parental racial socialization were also related to the

CPES in hypothesized ways. Preparation for bias messages were related to structural attributions ($r$ = .46, $p$ < .001), and the behavioral component of racial socialization was related to group participation ($r$ = .37, $p$ < .001) and school-based engagement ($r$ = .33, $p$ < .001), all providing evidence of convergent validity. On the other hand, self-worth messages were negatively correlated with individual attributions suggested that parents who made more individual attributions to education inequities reported transmitting lower levels of self-worth to their children ($r$ = -.13, $p$ = .02) while transmitting more negative messages about Black people ($r$ = .37, $p$ < .001).

## Discussion

This paper sought to develop and validate a measure of CC that is aligned with the realities that Black parents face with their children's schools and also represents their thoughts about racism and inequity and actions in regard to their children's education. CC represents how marginalized or oppressed people reflect on inequities, their motivation to address this perceived inequity, and the actions they take to remedy or disrupt such oppression. The creation of a measure that is reflective of Black parents beliefs about educational inequities adds to the limited number of studies that focus on the ways in which parents' views of the schools which may influence their engagement (Louque & Lundy, 2014; Mazama & Lundy, 2012). Similarly, measures of CC, although growing in number, have been designed for adolescent and young adult samples (Diemer et al., 2015). This measure contributes to both areas of study by connecting Black parents' critical analysis of educational inequities with the behaviors they engage in around their children's education. Sound measurement is fundamental to behavioral science and good measurement is an important precursor and necessary first step for all analyses (DeVellis, 2012; Furr & Bacharach, 2014). Therefore, having a measure that is psychometrically

sound, reliable, and valid contributes to further study in the area of Black parent's CC and critical school engagement.

After conducting an EFA and CFA, five internally consistent factors were found. Those five factors include: 1) structural attributions, or parents' perceptions that inequities are caused by systemic factors, institutional racism, etc., 2) group participation, or parents' participation in formal and informal groups for the benefit of their children's education, 3) internal efficacy, or parents' belief about their ability to make change, 4) individual attributions, or parents' belief that educational inequities are caused by individual factors, and 5) school-based engagement, or the actions that parents engage in at the school site. There was an additional factor that was found in the EFA but did not replicate in the CFA—racial socialization. Racial socialization is a construct that is theoretically linked to CC in racially marginalized youth and this relationship can be extended to adults. For example, Black parents who share messages of preparation for bias—or educate their children about the realities of racism and being Black in America—are likely aware of systemic racism, individual instances of discrimination, and are preparing their children to cope with these experiences (Anyiwo et al., 2018). Although correlated with factors in the CPES at the EFA stage, the fact that it did not remain during the CFA stage suggests that it may remain a related yet separate construct.

When examining the relationship between the five factors there were similar patterns for the most part in regard to strength and direction of the relation at the EFA and CFA stage. For instance, there was a small negative correlation between internal efficacy and individual attributions and a positive relationship between structural attributions and school-based engagement at both stages. This suggests that those who believe that racial inequities within school are caused by individuals feel less efficacious in their attempts to interact with schools

and advocate for their children. Previous research has shown that individuals who ascribe to the societal status quo or meritocracy and individualized root causes are less likely to participate in action (Jost, Becker, Osborne, & Badaan, 2017; Jost et al., 2012; Osborne & Sibley, 2013).

The small positive correlation between structural beliefs and school-based engagement suggest that parents who recognize systemic inequities within school are more involved at the school site, perhaps to try to advocate for or protect their children (Mazama & Lundy, 2012). This suggests that parents who are identifying systemic inequities may be involved at the school site even amidst their recognition of the ways that race and racism impact their and their children's experiences within the school space. There have not been other studies that have explicitly examined the link between parents' CC and their school-based engagement, but scholars have examined similar relationships between school trust, racial regard, and their school involvement. For instance, Ross and colleagues examined how parents' school trust was associated to their school involvement and found that more trust was related to more involvement both at home and at school (Ross, Marchand, Cox, & Rowley, 2018). These results taken with those from this study, suggest that parents who are critically analyzing racial inequities and those who trust the school are both involved within the school space. Further research should further disentangle the intentions behind this involvement as parents who trust the school and those who are critical of that space are likely driven by different reasons.

In both samples there was also a mid-sized positive correlation between individual and structural attributions. This provides evidence that these two beliefs are not absolute opposites and that individuals can endorse both simultaneously. Previous studies have also found that these beliefs tend to co-occur (Bañales et al., 2019: Godfrey & Wolf, 2015). It is not that structural attributions and individual attributions represent opposite ends of a spectrum, but rather they are

distinct belief systems and individuals can hold both belief systems about various domains at the same time.

Also as predicted, reports of internal efficacy were positively associated with both group participation and school-based engagement behaviors in both samples providing evidence that parents who feel more efficacious engage more with other parents and at the school site. Parental involvement literature has suggested that internal efficacy and parental actions are theoretically related (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; 1997). Self-efficacy theory offers one explanation of a potential predicator of behavior and that parents' appraisal of their personal capabilities plays a factor in the actions they decide to undertake (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). An interesting note, is that the action-oriented items grouped into two separate factors—one that focused on individual school-based items and another that reflected group actions that parents engaged in. In CC theory, critical action refers to both individual and collective action that is taken to redress unjust aspects of society (Watts et al., 2011). The resulting two factors suggests that perhaps actions that parents take alone and those that they take with other parents may be substantively different.

There were also some notable differences between the samples. For instance, at the EFA stage there was no relation between efficacy and structural attributions but at the CFA stage the two factors were related. Similarly, the strength of the relation between school based-engagement and structural attributions more than doubled in the CFA stage. This suggests that those relationships may be less stable and should be further explored with future samples.

It is common practice and an expected part of the process in factor analysis to delete items (Worthington & Whitaker, 2006). The scale began at 59 items and items were removed due to a variety of reasons including redundancy, cross loading, or low loading resulting in a

final 32-item scale. Although the scale was shortened at the CFA stage all of the final 32 items loaded onto the same factor that they did at the prior stage. At the EFA stage six items did not load above .40 or cross-loaded onto more than one factor. Within that group of excluded items were items developed to capture themes from interviews I conducted with Black parents. For instance, many parents discussed being aware of stereotypes that school officials might hold about them and therefore wanted to actively participate in order for school to not be viewed negatively. Because that was a reoccurring theme I heard from parents, the following item was written to capture that sentiment, "I participate actively in my child's education, so teachers do not make assumptions about me as a Black parent." This item attempted to include both the action and the intent for the action. However it did not load above the a priori cutoff. One reason to explain why this item did not load onto one of the six latent factors is because it was double-barreled; two ideas were conveyed in one item and the endorsement of such idea may refer to either or both of the ideas (DeVellis, 2012). Other items within that initial group that had to be removed were also potentially double-barreled including "I have confronted a school employee or teacher who said something that I thought was racist or prejudiced" and "I would not know how to advocate for my child if they were to be treated unfairly in school." Having to exclude these items was unfortunate because they included the criticality of why parents were involved. This raises a concern for measures such as this—are scholars able to include intent for actions and actions simultaneously and still write measure items that are easily understood, short, concise, and meaningful?

**Contributions**

A measure such as this one contributes to the field of critical quantitative methods (Sablan, 2018). Critical race methods have predominantly been thought of as specifically

qualitative methods that allows for counterstorytelling and the centering of the needs and experiences of people of color (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). However, there has been a recent push for quantitative criticalists or researchers who use quantitative methods and utilize models, measures, and analytic practices in order to ensure equity and identify perpetuation of systemic inequities (Stage & Wells, 2014). The creation of this measure contributes to this push for critical quantitative methods by incorporating the consideration of the ways that systems are oppressive in in order to ensure that deficit interpretations are not made from the results of a measure of Black parent school engagement.

Having a way to measure and quantify Black parent beliefs and actions can serve as a precursor to further examining their children's academic outcomes, sociopolitical participation, and advocacy. The has only been one study that has explicitly linked parent CC to youth outcomes and found that parents' structural attributions of race based achievement gaps predicts their children's later structural attributions of the race-based achievement gap (Bañales et al., 2019). Further, youth reports of their CC have been shown to be associated with numerous positive outcomes such as greater academic engagement (Hope & Jagers, 2014; O'Connor, 1997; Rapa, Diemer, & Bañales, 2018), enrollment in higher education (Rogers, Mediratta, & Shah, 2012), and greater clarity around career development (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016).

Parental CC can be hypothesized to hold similar positive outcomes. In the same way that parental processes such as racial socialization translate into positive child outcomes (Hughes et al., 2006), the same may be true for parental CC. Research has shown that parental racial socialization enables children to recognize and cope with experiences of discrimination (Spencer, 1983). More specifically, adolescents whose parents communicate messages of preparation for bias have demonstrated effective strategies for coping with discrimination (Phinney & Chavira,

1995). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that not only are their adaptive outcomes for parents who have higher levels of critical social analysis but those positive outcomes may also translate into their children having higher levels of academic engagement, more positive socioemotional outcomes, and higher levels of sociopolitical participation.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

Even with the contributions that the study provides the field, no study goes without its limitations. Although TurkPrime provided the ability to obtain a large, nationwide sample of Black parents fairly easily, there was also a downside to using this method of data collection. When needing a specific sample of the larger population, the TurkPrime cost per participant increases. For instance, there was a price associated with parents, another price for Black parent participants, and there would have been another more expensive price if I specified Black parents of a specific age group. Due to this limitation, in both samples, parent ages widely ranged which translates into having children of varying ages. I attempted to account for this by prompting parents to answer the items reflecting on their middle school or high school aged child. If they did not have a child in middle school or high school, I instructed them to respond based on how you think you would or how you have interacted with your child's school in the past or the future. Research has shown that parent engagement in their children's education varies by developmental stage so there is evidence to believe that aspects of the scale would be responded to differently based on the age of the participant's child (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). For example, as children transition from elementary to secondary school, parental involvement at the school site declines and children take a become more autonomous and subsequently desire to not have parents visit the school. The same may be true for critical parent engagement in that parents of older children may be less present within the school site and

perhaps instead encourage their children so self-advocate. Therefore, future directions with the CPES should examine whether these factors replicate in a sample of parents who currently have children in school.

An important future direction for this new measure is to consider whether within-group differences can be influential in the factor structure. For instance, both samples in this study included parents who broadly identified as African American/Black whether that be United States born or foreign born. However, there was a small number of parents who further specified their race/ethnicity by selecting African Caribbean/West Indian or African. Research has shown that in Afro-Caribbean samples, parents might feel less comfortable engaging in school-based engagement or believe it is not their role and instead focus on preparing children for academic success by fostering academic skills and proper behavior from home (Clay, 1995; Mitchell & Bryan, 2007). Similarly, cultural differences may shape parenting beliefs, values, and behaviors resulting in differences for US-born parents and foreign-born parents (García Coll, Meyer, & Brillon, 1994). For instance, scholars have noted how differing educational systems in parents' home countries may be at odds with the structure of schools in the US (Doucet 2011, Zéphir, 2001). Immigrant parents may also strongly adhere to the beliefs they held in their home-country and may not make the same attributions for educational inequities as parents born in the United States due to differing contexts, political histories, and lived experiences. Although there was not a large enough number of parents who identified as Afro-Caribbean or African in this study to examine if differences evinced, further work to determine if variation emerges within group is as open next step for empirical exploration.

Lastly, future research using the CPES would benefit from mixed-methods inquiry. This may come in the form of cognitive interviews where parents explain possible sources of

confusion in assessment items or explain their reactions to each item in an attempt to further refine the language of each item (Peterson, Peterson, & Powell, 2017). Cognitive interviewing would provide Black parents the opportunity to share their interpretation of the items and express their agreement, disagreement, and also clarity of items. Another benefit of cognitive interviews is that it would identify items where participant interpretation does not align with the researcher's intention and ways to modify these items can be brainstormed. This strategy may help word items in a way that gauges not only engagement but Black parent intentions. Additionally, a qualitative component could enable scholars to understand how parents describe their thoughts about educational inequities and how that relates to their action both at school and within parental groups. This inquiry could result in future iterations of the same scale or further elucidate how this measure associates with other hypothesized related constructs.

**Conclusion**

Black parents' high expectations of academic achievement and high standards around education have long been viewed as a means of overcoming social inequities and disadvantage (Barbarin, McCandies, Coleman, & Hill, 2005). This scale of parental CC has the potential to advance scholarship on parents' understanding of social structures, inequities present within them, and shed light on the interactions parents have with their children's schools. This study developed and validated an instrument that is designed to measure Black parents critical consciousness of education inequities. In study 1, an EFA was conducted in order to test the factors structure of the CPES. In study 2, a CFA was run in order to confirm the factor structure obtained in the EFA. Five internally consistent factors were found in the CFA, 1) structural attributions, 2) individual attributions, 3) efficacy, 4) group participation, and 5) school-based engagement. The CFA did not completely replicate what was found in the EFA, one factor was

excluded—racial socialization. These five factors resulted in a final 32-item scale with estimates of high internal consistency and strong item loadings.

Having a psychometrically sound measure will help elucidate the ways that Black parents critically view their position within public schools and how they subsequently engage within them. This CPES can advance current scholarship, inform educational practice, and provide a better understanding of how to strengthen the relationships between public schools and Black parents. Future research should further validate this measure with additional samples of Black parents to better understand how Black parents critical analysis are associated with the ways that they advocate for the fair and equitable education of their children.

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*Table 4.1.Components of CC and correspondence to proposed model of Parental CC.*

| Critical Consciousness Scale (Diemer, Rapa, Park, & Perry, 2017) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Critical Reflection | | Critical Motivation | Critical Action |
| Perceived Inequality | Egalitarianism | Sociopolitical Efficacy/Motivation | Sociopolitical Participation |
| **Parental Critical Consciousness Scale** | | | |
| Critical Reflection | | Critical Motivation | Critical Action |
| Parents Awareness of Societal & Educational Inequities | -- | Role Construction & Self-Efficacy | Critical Parent Engagement |

*Table 4.2. Listing of original items and sources.*

| Item | Item adapted from | Citation |
|---|---|---|
| Q1. Society has failed to provide good schools for many Black Americans. | MADICS Wave 6 | MADICS website |
| Q2. The public-school system does not give everyone an equal chance. | Critical Consciousness Inventory | Thomas et al., 2014 |
| Q3. I believe that Black students are treated poorly in schools because of current and past injustices. | Critical Consciousness Inventory | Thomas et al., 2014 |
| Q4. Black Americans have fewer chances to get a good high school education. | Critical Consciousness Scale | Diemer et al., 2014 |
| Q5. White students receive unearned privileges in school. | Contemporary Critical Consciousness Measure | Shin et al., 2016 |
| Q6. The overrepresentation of Black people in prison is directly related to racist disciplinary policies in public schools. | Contemporary Critical Consciousness Measure | Shin et al., 2016 |
| Q7. Standardized tests are biased against Black students. | Achievement Gap Attributions | Swinton et al., 2011 |
| Q8. Black parents are less involved than White parents at their children's school. | Achievement Gap Attributions | Swinton et al., 2011 |
| Q9. Some teachers are racist against Black students. | Achievement Gap Attributions | Swinton et al., 2011 |
| Q10. Some teachers have low expectations for Black students. | Achievement Gap Attributions | Swinton et al., 2011 |
| Q11. There is a mismatch between classroom culture and home culture for Black students. | Achievement Gap Attributions | Swinton et al., 2011 |
| Q12. The racial achievement gap is caused by a cultural mismatch between Black students and schools. | Achievement Gap Attributions | Swinton et al., 2011 |
| Q13. There is a lack of access to learning materials in Black households. | Achievement Gap Attributions | Swinton et al., 2011 |

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|---|---|---|
| Q14. The racial achievement gap is caused by Black students being less motivated than White students. | Achievement Gap Attributions | Swinton et al., 2011 |
| Q15. White Americans have more opportunities than Black Americans, and that makes it easier for them to graduate from high school. | Achievement Gap Attributions | Swinton et al., 2011 |
| Q16. There are genetic differences between Black people and White people that make it easier for White students to be successful in school and life in general. | Achievement Gap Attributions | Swinton et al., 2012 |
| Q17. My child's race influences their academic opportunities. | Written by first author | |
| Q18. Black parents value school less than other parents. | Written by first author | |
| Q19. Schools that teach predominantly Black students receive less funding. | Written by first author | |
| Q20. American schools are just as segregated as before Brown v Board of Education in 1954. | Written by first author | |
| Q21. I would feel able to respond to someone at my child's school who says something that is racist or prejudiced about me or my child. | Written by first author | |
| Q22. I have a pretty good understanding of the school system and how to advocate for my child. | Written by first author | |
| Q23. I am certain I can figure out how to help my child with their homework. | Written by first author | |
| Q24. I would feel able to intervene if my child experienced discrimination at school. | Written by first author | |
| Q25. I would not know how to advocate for my child if they were to be treated unfairly in school. | Written by first author | |
| Q26. I feel successful about my efforts to engage with my child's school. | Written by first author | |
| Q27. I do not perceive any barriers that would stop me from being involved in my child's school. | Written by first author | |
| Q28. I feel I can play a role in ensuring that my child receives a good education. | Written by first author | |
| Q29. I am persistent in ensuring my child receives a good education, even if I face resistance from school faculty or staff. | Written by first author | |
| Q30. I am confident that I know what is best for my child and I make sure that it is happening at the school. | Written by first author | |
| Q31. I feel confident in ensuring my child receives a good education. | Written by first author | |
| Q32. I feel comfortable responding to communication from my child's teachers. | Written by first author | |
| Q33. I feel able to initiate conversation with my child's teachers. | Written by first author | |
| Q34. There are things that I can do to make sure my child gets a good education. | Written by first author | |

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| Q35. I know how to navigate the public-school system. | Written by first author | |
| Q36. I participate actively in my child's education so that teachers know that I am interested in my child's education. | Written by first author | |
| Q37. I participate actively in my child's education, so teachers do not make assumptions about me as a Black parent. | Written by first author | |
| Q38. I initiate communication with my child's teachers. | Written by first author | |
| Q39. I participate in a parenting group or organization. | Written by first author | |
| Q40. I have initiated a meeting with the administrators (e.g., principal) or counselors at my child's school. | Written by first author | |
| Q41. I have participated in a discussion about problems present in public schools. | Critical Consciousness Scale | Diemer et al., 2014 |
| Q42. I have chosen a school where I know my child will be treated fairly. | Written by first author | |
| Q43. I have told my child that some people may try to keep him/her from being successful because he/she is Black. | Racial Socialization | Lesane-Brown, et al., 2006 |
| Q44. I have told my child that he/she may have to work twice as hard as White students to get ahead. | Racial Socialization | Lesane-Brown, et al., 2006 |
| Q45. I have confronted a school employee or teacher who said something that I thought was racist or prejudiced. | Critical Consciousness Scale | |
| Q46. I am physically present at my child's school. | Written by first author | Diemer et al., 2014 |
| Q47. I am invested in making sure my child gets a good education. | Written by first author | |
| Q48. Teachers and staff at my child's school know me by name. | Written by first author | |
| Q49. I introduce myself to my child's teachers, so they know who I am. | Written by first author | |
| Q50. I raise my child to understand that there is racism present in the world. | Written by first author | |
| Q51. I have told my child that some teachers may doubt their ability to be successful because he/she is Black. | Written by first author | |
| Q52. I openly state my concerns to teachers and administrators. | Written by first author | |
| Q53. I am part of the Parent Teacher Association at my child's school. | Written by first author | |
| Q54. I am part of a group of parents that helps make decisions about my child's schools. | Written by first author | |

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| Q55. I visit my child's class unannounced. | Written by first author |
| Q56. I visit my child's classroom, so I can see firsthand what is going on. | Written by first author |
| Q57. I have joined with other parents unofficially to discuss our children's academic opportunities. | Written by first author |
| Q58. I have taught my child how to advocate for themselves when they feel they are being racially discriminated against. | Written by first author |
| Q59. Thinking about how my parents addressed (or did not address) instances of racial discrimination impacts how I parent. | Written by first author |

*Table 4.3. Items & factor assignment at exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis stage.*

| | **Item Stem** | **Factor at EFA** | **Factor at CFA** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | Society has failed to provide good schools for many Black Americans. | 1 | NA |
| Q2 | The public-school system does not give everyone an equal chance. | 1 | NA |
| Q3 | I believe that Black students are treated poorly in schools because of current and past injustices. | 1 | 1 |
| Q4 | Black Americans have fewer chances to get a good high school education. | 1 | NA |
| Q5 | White students receive unearned privileges in school. | 1 | 1 |
| Q6 | The overrepresentation of Black people in prison is directly related to racist disciplinary policies in public schools. | 1 | 1 |
| Q7 | Standardized tests are biased against Black students. | 1 | 1 |
| Q8 | Black parents are less involved than White parents at their children's school. | 5 | 5 |
| Q9 | Some teachers are racist against Black students. | 1 | NA |
| Q10 | Some teachers have low expectations for Black students. | 1 | 1 |
| Q12 | The racial achievement gap is caused by a cultural mismatch between Black students and schools. | 1 | 1 |
| Q13 | There is a lack of access to learning materials in Black households. | 5 | NA |
| Q14 | The racial achievement gap is caused by Black students being less motivated than White students. | 5 | 5 |
| Q15 | White Americans have more opportunities than Black Americans, and that makes it easier for them to graduate from high school. | 1 | 1 |
| Q16 | There are genetic differences between Black people and White people that make it easier for White students to be successful in school and life in general. | 5 | 5 |
| Q17 | My child's race influences their academic opportunities. | 1 | 1 |
| Q18 | Black parents value school less than other parents. | 5 | 5 |
| Q19 | Schools that teach predominantly Black students receive less funding. | 1 | 1 |
| Q20 | American schools are just as segregated as before Brown v Board of Education in 1954. | 1 | 1 |
| Q21 | I would feel able to respond to someone at my child's school who says something that is racist or prejudiced about me or my child. | 3 | NA |
| Q22 | I have a pretty good understanding of the school system and how to advocate for my child. | 3 | 3 |
| Q23 | I am certain I can figure out how to help my child with their homework. | 3 | 3 |
| Q24 | I would feel able to intervene if my child experienced discrimination at school. | 3 | 3 |
| Q25 | I would not know how to advocate for my child if they were to be treated unfairly in school. | NA | 1 |
| Q26 | I feel successful about my efforts to engage with my child's school. | 3 | 3 |
| Q27 | I do not perceive any barriers that would stop me from being involved in my child's school. | 3 | NA |
| Q28 | I feel I can play a role in ensuring that my child receives a good education. | 3 | 3 |

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|---|---|---|---|
| Q29 | I am persistent in ensuring my child receives a good education, even if I face resistance from school faculty or staff. | 3 | 3 |
| Q30 | I am confident that I know what is best for my child and I make sure that it is happening at the school. | 3 | 3 |
| Q31 | I feel confident in ensuring my child receives a good education. | 3 | 3 |
| Q32 | I feel comfortable responding to communication from my child's teachers. | 3 | 3 |
| Q33 | I feel able to initiate conversation with my child's teachers. | 3 | NA |
| Q34 | There are things that I can do to make sure my child gets a good education. | 3 | 3 |
| Q35 | I know how to navigate the public-school system. | NA | NA |
| Q36 | I participate actively in my child's education so that teachers know that I am interested in my child's education. | 3 | NA |
| Q37 | I participate actively in my child's education, so teachers do not make assumptions about me as a Black parent. | NA | NA |
| Q38 | I initiate communication with my child's teachers. | 6 | NA |
| Q39 | I participate in a parenting group or organization. | 2 | 2 |
| Q40 | I have initiated a meeting with the administrators (e.g., principal) or counselors at my child's school. | 6 | NA |
| Q41 | I have participated in a discussion about problems present in public schools. | NA | NA |
| Q42 | I have chosen a school where I know my child will be treated fairly. | 3 | NA |
| Q43 | I have told my child that some people may try to keep him/her from being successful because he/she is Black. | 4 | NA |
| Q44 | I have told my child that he/she may have to work twice as hard as White students to get ahead. | 4 | NA |
| Q45 | I have confronted a school employee or teacher who said something that I thought was racist or prejudiced. | NA | NA |
| Q46 | I am physically present at my child's school. | 6 | 6 |
| Q47 | I am invested in making sure my child gets a good education. | 3 | NA |
| Q48 | Teachers and staff at my child's school know me by name. | 6 | 6 |
| Q49 | I introduce myself to my child's teachers, so they know who I am. | 6 | NA |
| Q50 | I raise my child to understand that there is racism present in the world. | 4 | NA |
| Q51 | I have told my child that some teachers may doubt their ability to be successful because he/she is Black. | 4 | NA |
| Q52 | I openly state my concerns to teachers and administrators. | 6 | 6 |
| Q53 | I am part of the Parent Teacher Association at my child's school. | 2 | NA |
| Q54 | I am part of a group of parents that helps make decisions about my child's schools. | 2 | 2 |
| Q55 | I visit my child's class unannounced. | 6 | 6 |
| Q56 | I visit my child's classroom, so I can see firsthand what is going on. | 6 | 6 |
| Q57 | I have joined with other parents unofficially to discuss our children's academic opportunities. | 2 | 2 |
| Q58 | I have taught my child how to advocate for themselves when they feel they are being racially discriminated against. | 4 | NA |
| Q59 | Thinking about how my parents addressed (or did not address) instances of racial discrimination impacts how I parent. | NA | NA |

*Table 4.4. Reliability of factors at EFA. Cronbach's alpha and inter-item correlation (IIC) reported.*

| | ∝ | IIC | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Structural Attributions | 0.93 | 0.46 | 4.04 | .99 |
| 2. Group Participation | 0.82 | 0.53 | 3.80 | 1.35 |
| 3. Efficacy | 0.91 | 0.42 | 5.31 | .61 |
| 4. Racial Socialization | 0.88 | 0.59 | 4.49 | 1.23 |
| 5. Individual Attributions | 0.77 | 0.4 | 3.05 | 1.17 |
| 6. School-based Engagement | 0.8 | 0.37 | 4.77 | .84 |

*Table 4.5. Factor Correlations at Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) Stage*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Structural Attributions | - | | | | | |
| 2. Individual Attributions | .36*** | - | | | | |
| 3. Efficacy | NS | -.16** | - | | | |
| 4. Group Participation | .12* | .15** | .27*** | - | | |
| 5. Racial Socialization | .47*** | .13* | .19** | .29*** | - | |
| 6. School-based Engagement | .12* | NS | .57*** | .48*** | .31*** | - |

*Note. *** < .001, ** < .01, * < .05, NS = not significant.*

*Table 4.6. Reasons for item removal.*

| Item | Reason Removed |
|---|---|
| Q1. Society has failed to provide good schools for many Black Americans. | Correlated with Q3 |
| Q2. The public-school system does not give everyone an equal chance. | Correlated with Q3 |
| Q3. I believe that Black students are treated poorly in schools because of current and past injustices. | |
| Q4. Black Americans have fewer chances to get a good high school education. | Correlated with Q3 |
| Q5. White students receive unearned privileges in school. | |
| Q6. The overrepresentation of Black people in prison is directly related to racist disciplinary policies in public schools. | |
| Q7. Standardized tests are biased against Black students. | |
| Q8. Black parents are less involved than White parents at their children's school. | |
| Q9. Some teachers are racist against Black students. | Correlated with Q10 |
| Q10. Some teachers have low expectations for Black students. | |
| Q11. There is a mismatch between classroom culture and home culture for Black students. | Correlated with Q11 |
| Q12. The racial achievement gap is caused by a cultural mismatch between Black students and schools. | |
| Q13. There is a lack of access to learning materials in Black households. | Cross loaded |
| Q14. The racial achievement gap is caused by Black students being less motivated than White students. | |
| Q15.White Americans have more opportunities than Black Americans, and that makes it easier for them to graduate from high school. | |
| Q16. There are genetic differences between Black people and White people that make it easier for White students to be successful in school and life in general. | |
| Q17. My child's race influences their academic opportunities. | |
| Q18. Black parents value school less than other parents. | |
| Q19. Schools that teach predominantly Black students receive less funding. | |

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|---|---|
| Q20. American schools are just as segregated as before Brown v Board of Education in 1954. | Cross loaded |
| Q21. I would feel able to respond to someone at my child's school who says something that is racist or prejudiced about me or my child. | Cross loaded |
| Q22. I have a pretty good understanding of the school system and how to advocate for my child. | |
| Q23. I am certain I can figure out how to help my child with their homework. | |
| Q24. I would feel able to intervene if my child experienced discrimination at school. | |
| Q25. I would not know how to advocate for my child if they were to be treated unfairly in school. | Low loading |
| Q26. I feel successful about my efforts to engage with my child's school. | |
| Q27. I do not perceive any barriers that would stop me from being involved in my child's school. | Low loading |
| Q28. I feel I can play a role in ensuring that my child receives a good education. | |
| Q29. I am persistent in ensuring my child receives a good education, even if I face resistance from school faculty or staff. | |
| Q30. I am confident that I know what is best for my child and I make sure that it is happening at the school. | |
| Q31. I feel confident in ensuring my child receives a good education. | |
| Q32. I feel comfortable responding to communication from my child's teachers. | |
| Q33. I feel able to initiate conversation with my child's teachers. | Correlated with Q32 |
| Q34. There are things that I can do to make sure my child gets a good education. | |
| Q35. I know how to navigate the public-school system. | Low loading |
| Q36. I participate actively in my child's education so that teachers know that I am interested in my child's education. | Cross loaded |
| Q37. I participate actively in my child's education, so teachers do not make assumptions about me as a Black parent. | Low loading |
| Q38. I initiate communication with my child's teachers. | Cross loaded |
| Q39. I participate in a parenting group or organization. | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Q40. I have initiated a meeting with the administrators (e.g., principal) or counselors at my child's school. | Cross loaded |
| Q41. I have participated in a discussion about problems present in public schools. | Low loading |
| Q42. I have chosen a school where I know my child will be treated fairly. | Low loading |
| Q43. I have told my child that some people may try to keep him/her from being successful because he/she is Black. | Correlated with Q44 |
| Q44. I have told my child that he/she may have to work twice as hard as White students to get ahead. | Cross loaded |
| Q45. I have confronted a school employee or teacher who said something that I thought was racist or prejudiced. | Low loading |
| Q46. I am physically present at my child's school. | |
| Q47. I am invested in making sure my child gets a good education. | Cross loaded |
| Q48. Teachers and staff at my child's school know me by name. | |
| Q49. I introduce myself to my child's teachers, so they know who I am. | Cross loaded |
| Q50. I raise my child to understand that there is racism present in the world. | |
| Q51. I have told my child that some teachers may doubt their ability to be successful because he/she is Black. | Correlated with Q44 |
| Q52. I openly state my concerns to teachers and administrators. | |
| Q53. I am part of the Parent Teacher Association at my child's school. | Correlated with Q54 |
| Q54. I am part of a group of parents that helps make decisions about my child's schools. | |
| Q55. I visit my child's class unannounced. | |
| Q56. I visit my child's classroom, so I can see firsthand what is going on. | |
| Q57. I have joined with other parents unofficially to discuss our children's academic opportunities. | |
| Q58. I have taught my child how to advocate for themselves when they feel they are being racially discriminated against. | Cross loaded |
| Q59. Thinking about how my parents addressed (or did not address) instances of racial discrimination impacts how I parent. | Low loading |

*Table 4.7. Reliability of factors at CFA. Cronbach's alpha and inter-item correlation (IIC) reported.*

| | ∝ | IIC | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Structural Attributions | 0.91 | 0.49 | 3.83 | 1.12 |
| 2. Group Participation | 0.82 | 0.6 | 3.89 | 1.39 |
| 3. Efficacy | 0.92 | 0.56 | 5.22 | .77 |
| 4. Individual Attributions | 0.77 | 0.46 | 2.88 | 1.25 |
| 5. School-based Engagement | 0.78 | 0.45 | 4.47 | 1.05 |

*Table 4.8. Factor Correlations at Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Stage*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Structural Attributions | - | | | | |
| 2. Individual Attributions | .42*** | - | | | |
| 3. Efficacy | .12* | -.21*** | - | | |
| 4. Group Participation | .19*** | .20*** | .15** | - | |
| 5. School-based Engagement | .27*** | NS | .42*** | .60*** | - |

*Note. *** < .001, ** < .01, * < .05, NS = not significant.*

*Table 4.9. Measurement model: Confirmatory Factor Loadings*

| | Item | Loading | SE | R squared |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Factor 1: Structural Attributions** | | | | |
| 3 | I believe that Black students are treated poorly in schools because of current and past injustices. | 0.79* | 0.03 | 0.62 |
| 5 | White students receive unearned privileges in school. | 0.72* | 0.04 | 0.52 |
| 6 | The overrepresentation of Black people in prison is directly related to racist disciplinary policies in public schools. | 0.75* | 0.03 | 0.56 |
| 7 | Standardized tests are biased against Black students. | 0.74* | 0.03 | 0.55 |
| 10 | Some teachers have low expectations for Black students. | 0.71* | 0.04 | 0.50 |
| 12 | The racial achievement gap is caused by a cultural mismatch between Black students and schools. | 0.77* | 0.03 | 0.59 |
| 15 | White Americans have more opportunities than Black Americans, and that makes it easier for them to graduate from high school. | 0.69* | 0.04 | 0.48 |
| 17 | My child's race influences their academic opportunities. | 0.55* | 0.04 | 0.30 |
| 19 | Schools that teach predominantly Black students receive less funding. | 0.69* | 0.04 | 0.48 |
| 20 | American schools are just as segregated as before Brown v Board of Education in 1954. | 0.60* | 0.04 | 0.36 |
| **Factor 2: Group Participation** | | | | |
| 39 | I participate in a parenting group or organization. | 0.74* | 0.04 | 0.55 |
| 54 | I am part of a group of parents that helps make decisions about my child’s schools. | 0.80* | 0.04 | 0.64 |
| 57 | I have joined with other parents unofficially to discuss our children's academic opportunities. | 0.77* | 0.04 | 0.59 |
| **Factor 3: Parental Efficacy** | | | | |
| 22 | I have a pretty good understanding of the school system and how to advocate for my child. | 0.62* | 0.05 | 0.38 |
| 23 | I am certain I can figure out how to help my child with their homework. | 0.72* | 0.05 | 0.52 |
| 24 | I would feel able to intervene if my child experienced discrimination at school. | 0.73* | 0.05 | 0.53 |
| 26 | I feel successful about my efforts to engage with my child's school. | 0.61* | 0.06 | 0.37 |
| 28 | I feel I can play a role in ensuring that my child receives a good education. | 0.82* | 0.03 | 0.67 |
| 29 | I am persistent in ensuring my child receives a good education, even if I face resistance from school faculty or staff. | 0.78* | 0.03 | 0.61 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 | I am confident that I know what is best for my child and I make sure that it is happening at the school. | 0.80* | 0.03 | 0.64 |
| 31 | I feel confident in ensuring my child receives a good education. | 0.79* | 0.03 | 0.62 |
| 32 | I feel comfortable responding to communication from my child's teachers. | 0.80* | 0.03 | 0.64 |
| 34 | There are things that I can do to make sure my child gets a good education. | 0.77* | 0.05 | 0.59 |
| **Factor 4: Individual Attributions** | | | | |
| 8 | Black parents are less involved than White parents at their children's school. | 0.63* | 0.05 | 0.40 |
| 14 | The racial achievement gap is caused by Black students being less motivated than White students. | 0.77* | 0.04 | 0.59 |
| 16 | There are genetic differences between Black people and White people that make it easier for White students to be successful in school and life in general. | 0.64* | 0.05 | 0.41 |
| 18 | Black parents value school less than other parents. | 0.72* | 0.04 | 0.52 |
| **Factor 5: School-based Engagement** | | | | |
| 46 | I am physically present at my child's school. | 0.68* | 0.05 | 0.46 |
| 48 | Teachers and staff at my child's school know me by name. | 0.73* | 0.04 | 0.53 |
| 52 | I openly state my concerns to teachers and administrators. | 0.73* | 0.04 | 0.53 |
| 55 | I visit my child's class unannounced. | 0.51* | 0.05 | 0.26 |
| 56 | I visit my child's classroom, so I can see firsthand what is going on. | 0.67* | 0.04 | 0.44 |

*Note: * all loadings < .001.*

*Table 4.10. Evidence of convergent and divergent validity*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Structural Attributions | - | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Individual Attributions | .42*** | - | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Efficacy | .12* | - .21*** | - | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Group Participation | .19*** | .20*** | .15** | - | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. School-based Engagement | .27*** | .08 | .42*** | .60*** | - | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. Social Dominance Orientation | - .12* | .34*** | - .44*** | .16** | - .04 | - | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. CoBRAS-Unawareness of Racial Privilege | - .44*** | - .15** | .12** | - .05 | .05 | .10 | - | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8. CoBRAS-Institutional Discrimination | .04 | .41*** | - .19** | .22*** | .04 | .51*** | .10 | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9. CoBRAS-Blatant Racial Issues | - .07 | .34*** | - .22*** | .24*** | .07 | .57*** | .26*** | .59*** | - | | | | | | | | | |
| 10. CoBRAS Total Score | - .23*** | - .27*** | -.13* | .23*** | .07 | .53*** | .57*** | .80*** | .81*** | - | | | | | | | | |
| 11. MIBI-Centrality | .43*** | .03 | .36*** | .19*** | .29*** | - .28*** | -.23*** | -.17** | -.25*** | - .29*** | - | | | | | | | |
| 12. MIBI-Private Regard | .21*** | - .09 | .46*** | .08 | .30*** | - .36*** | -.08 | -.25*** | - .29*** | - .28*** | .67*** | - | | | | | | |
| 13. MIBI-Public Regard | - .13* | .18** | - .07 | .30*** | .13* | .34*** | .19** | .42*** | .37*** | .46*** | .07 | .06 | - | | | | | |
| 14.RS- Prep for Bias | .46*** | .12** | .07 | .14** | .17** | -.06 | -.17** | .06 | -.04 | -.07 | .28*** | .11* | -.05 | - | | | | |
| 15. RS - Behavioral | .35*** | .03 | .16** | .37*** | .33*** | -.06 | -.10 | -.04 | -.05 | -.10 | .37*** | .27*** | .08 | .60*** | - | | | |
| 16. RS - Self Worth | .12* | - .13** | .33*** | .04 | .20*** | - .35*** | .01 | -.18** | -.26*** | - .19*** | .29*** | .39*** | -.04 | .33*** | .43*** | - | | |
| 17. RS - Egalitarianism | .18** | .06 | .17** | .22*** | .29*** | -.12* | .01 | .09 | .04 | .08 | .22*** | .17** | .13* | .55*** | .59*** | .62*** | - | |
| 18. RS - Race Pride | .27** | - .06 | .25*** | .18** | .30*** | -.22*** | -.09 | -.16** | - .17** | - .20*** | .39*** | .39*** | -.02 | .60*** | .69*** | .65*** | .69*** | - |
| 19. RS - Negative Messages | .07 | .37*** | - .44*** | .24*** | .01 | .58*** | .00 | .43*** | .50*** | .41*** | - .20*** | - .37*** | .30*** | .28*** | .19*** | - .20*** | .13** | -.03 |

*Note. *** < .001, ** < .01, * < .05, NS = not significant.*

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

The overall purpose of the three papers of this dissertation was to provide a better understanding of how Black parents critically think about racial inequities present in schools, to recognize how that thinking may influence their school engagement, and to develop more inclusive and relevant measures of parental CC in relation to their engagement. This endeavor centered on Black parents because of the racialized power dynamics present in schools and the historical exclusion, disenfranchisement, and educational inequities they have faced for decades within the United States (Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Wilson, 2019). Elucidating the ways that Black parents critically view the racially oppressive nature of public schools and how they subsequently engage advances current scholarship on parent involvement that rarely considers race and racism. Howard and Reynolds (2008) posit that any analysis that explores the relationship between parents and schools without explicitly attending to race misses one of the primary factors that complicates the roles they assume and the degrees to which they become involved. With that assertion, the work presented in the theoretical paper and the two empirical studies highlights: 1) the necessity of having a theoretical model that frames Black parent involvement though a CRT lens that acknowledges and challenges racism within the school system, 2) explores how Black parents make sense of these racial inequities and how that understanding is related to their engagement, and 3) presents the development and validation of the critical parent engagement scale. Further recap of each paper is below followed by directions for future research and practice based on the findings from this dissertation.

The first paper reviewed and integrated two critical frameworks—CRT and CC. Using critical theories emphasizes the ways that racialized power asymmetries are deeply entrenched and embedded in society, including schools (Salter & Haugen, 2017). These racial power dynamics manifest as grossly under-resourced schools, harsh disciplinary rates, disproportionate expulsion rates and deficit beliefs about Black students and families. Although educators often endorse colorblind ideologies and are not willing to address or talk about the ways that racism is omnipresent in the schools (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Chapman, 2013), it is likely that Black parents are aware of these influences and thinking about them. Parents' understanding of the ways that racism functions within schools and creates racial inequities may determine the ways they engage and advocate on behalf of their children. By employing components of CC, this integration considers parents' critical social analysis, perceptions of their efficacy, and their action (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011). This integrated theory therefore suggests that parents' critical reflections and motivations may influence the ways that they critically engage and advocate for their children within the school system. In order to explore this theoretical proposition, I next interviewed twenty Black parents, which I summarize below.

The first empirical study examined the relationship between Black parents' critical reflection and the actions they engaged in in relation to their children's education. Most existing literature has examined parents' views about racial educational inequities (Chapman, 2013; Cooper, 2007; Mazama & Lundy, 2012), or parents' engagement behaviors, but there has not been much empirical research that has explicitly analyzed the two in relation to one another. The findings of this study support previous research that shows the range of ways that Black parents are involved in their children's education (Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004; Cooper, 2009; Wilson, 2019). However, when examining the link between critical reflection and

action, the qualitative findings suggest that the relationship between critical reflection of racial inequities in schools and critical parent engagement is complicated. It is not that parents who are critically engaged in solely advocacy roles or that parents who endorse traditional beliefs only engage in traditional ways. For instance, Black parents in this sample discussed the many ways that they engaged in a vigilant form of parent involvement to ensure that their children were not discriminated against or mistreated. The prerequisite to that behavior may not be critical beliefs about inequity but another factor that influences this type of action could be their desire to protect their children. "Racial protectionism" is a term coined by Mazama and Lundy (2012) to capture the idea that Black parents consciously work to protect their children from racism in schools. They engage in these behaviors due to their understanding of how racism interferes in a profound and destructive manner with their children's ability to develop their full academic potential as well as a healthy sense of worth and self-confidence. The next paper outlines the need and benefit for having an instrument to measure the beliefs and actions associated with parental CC.

The second empirical study of this dissertation provided preliminary evidence of the validity and reliability of the critical parent engagement scale. Current measures of parent involvement do not consider the influences of race and racism in explaining Black parent engagement in schools. This measure was created in order to reflect parents' awareness and understanding of racial inequity and its relation to how they engage with their children's schools and resulted in five factors: 1) structural attributions, 2) individual attributions, 3) efficacy, 4) group participation, and 5) school-based engagement. Having a psychometrically sound measure will help elucidate the ways that Black parents critically view their position within public schools and how they subsequently engage within them. This CPES can advance current scholarship,

inform educational practice, and provide a better understanding of how to strengthen the relationships between public schools and Black parents.

**Contributions**

The main contribution of this dissertation is that it advances research that critically explores Black parents' involvement but stops short of explaining how Black parents' analyses of race and racism shapes their actions and efforts to ensure fair treatment and academic success of their children within schools. Critical race theorists define counterstories as narratives that reject that master narratives in American society. These master narratives are stories created by the elite within society (i.e., white Americans) in order to justify their race and class privilege but are made to appear neutral and objective (Delgado, 1989). The results of the study use Black parents' voice that show the many ways that Black parents are engaged in both traditional and critical ways, reject the master narratives which state that Black parents are uninterested in their children's education or are absent.

This theoretical integration advances the idea of critical parent engagement, a type of engagement behavior that is undergirded by an awareness and understanding of how structural racism influences individual action and contributes to the frameworks of both CC and CRT. By leveraging CRT in a CC framework, this dissertation focuses on one specific type of oppression (racism) in a specific context (schools). Current conceptualizations of CC are broad in their purview of various systems of oppression and moral rejection of societal inequities, such as social, economic, racial/ethnic, and gender inequities that constrain well-being and human agency (Watts et al., 2011). Research has shown that individuals think about the root causes of different inequities differently (Flanagan et al., 2014; Godfrey & Wolf, 2015), providing evidence that these different systems of oppression should be examined separately. Therefore,

the focus on racism, in particular, enables scholars to better understand how racial dynamics impact the lived experiences of Black families in schools.

Further, by integrating CC into CRT it further provides a way of examining critical race praxis by incorporating a consideration of the constructs that associate and potentially contributes to that action. Freire (1970) defines praxis as reflection and action that are intended to transform oppressive structures. For instance, he suggests that through literacy, those who are oppressed can gain a critical awareness of their own condition and engage in action towards their own liberation (Freire, 1970). As the qualitative findings suggest, some parents are engaging in critical actions without having discussed attributing root causes of racial inequity to structural reasons, whereas some parents who held more individual views of racial inequity are also engaging in critical actions such as advocacy and racial socialization. Since praxis is defined as the combination of reflection and action, further research should explore if there are differences between parents who are engaging in praxis and those who are engaging in critical actions as more reactionary or for reasons such as racial protectionism (Mazama & Lundy, 2012). Perhaps for those parents who are connecting their critical parent engagement to their awareness and understanding of structural racism, their actions may have differing results either for promoting justice in the schools or for their child's educational and sociopolitical outcomes.

Additionally, critical parent engagement may be different than other forms of parent involvement that have been theorized to be in response to analyses of racial prejudice. For instance the term vigilant parenting has been used to describe parent involvement that is meant to protect their child from mistreatment (Rowley, Helaire, & Banerjee, 2010). Vigilant parent involvement is in response to parents' perceptions of discrimination either that they have personally experienced or that they believe their children will experience. Critical parent

engagement is different than vigilant parenting because it not only considers the interpersonal aspects of racism like discrimination and prejudice but also the root causes of racial inequities in schools like systemic racism, white supremacy, and parents perceptions of the racialized power dynamics embedded in the school's structure.

This dissertation does not only contribute to the theoretical understanding of the ways in which Black parents perform their parent engagement, but it also provides a way to practically measure these behaviors through the development and validation of a new scale. A majority of studies define parental involvement as specific acts in the home or at school (Jeynes, 2010) but these general measures do not account for differing parent techniques or the ways in which parent engage within a racially oppressive system. By documenting the experiences that Black parents have with the schools in relation to racial dynamics, the CPES provides a more realistic measure of parental involvement and Black parent CC that more accurately and effectively can be used with samples of Black parents.

**Directions for Future Research**

A question to consider is whether parents need a CC of racial inequities. If critical parental engagement is a desirable, valued action that will reduce inequality, but the results show that there is not one sole way of thinking about educational inequities that leads to critical parent engagement, perhaps parental CC is not a necessary precursor. Since these results suggest that parents advocate for their children even without having a CC of educational inequities, future inquiry should continue to determine whether parent CC is a necessary precursor to critical action. However another way to ascertain the necessity or benefit of Black parent CC is to see how it would relate to children outcomes. For instance, there is a wealth of research that exemplifies how parent processes such as political socialization and racial socialization

positively impact child outcomes. (Diemer, 2012; Flanagan, 2013; Hughes et al., 2006) and the same may be true for parental CC. Therefore, it may be useful to examine if there is a connection parents who have higher levels of critical social analysis and children who have higher levels of academic engagement, more positive socioemotional outcomes, and higher levels of sociopolitical participation.

Additionally, as discussed in the measure development and validation paper, intention is important to further understand how Black parents beliefs are related to their actions. This dissertation revealed the difficulty in trying to capture the intention of Black parents' engagement behaviors. For instance, items that were written to represent parents' awareness of racial dynamics in schools like "I participate actively in my child's education, so teachers do not make assumptions about me as a Black parent" had to be removed. The intention behind the action is important because parents from all racial/ethnic groups may engage in the same behavior but for vastly different reasons. For Black parents especially, intention may reflect the critical aspect of critical parent engagement. Continuing to write and test items that better capture the reasons why Black parents engage with their children's school is an avenue for future research. After further revising and editing items with the attempt to capture intentionality, the next step researchers can take is to validate the measure with other samples of Black parents to see if factor structure replicates and whether there are within-group differences. Lastly, since parent age had a wide range and it was difficult to discern children's age future studies using the CPES should specify the age ranges of the children as parent involvement changes as children progress through school (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Stevenson & Baker, 1987) which by extension may also impact critical parent engagement.

**Practice Based Implications**

When thinking about what these findings mean for practice within schools, I believe that these results could be best used in teacher preparation programs, with educational consultants, and to inform professional development trainings for current teachers. Pre-service teachers should be educated on the historical struggle and systematic exclusion that Black families have faced in education. Instead of merely categorizing Black parents as involved, angry, or disinterested, understanding the ways in which the culture and power structures present in schools constrain and impact parents' views about the schools and subsequent choices and engagement is necessary. This knowledge about the ways in which racism is embedded in the school system and how that affects the learning environment for Black children might help pre-service teachers not propagate these same types of deficit-beliefs and stereotypes moving forward. Additionally, educational consultants who assess school climates can use the CPES to gauge how Black parents feel about the schools and how that influences their engagement and communicate that back to schools. With that information schools can better plan parent engagement activities with this awareness in mind.

Results from both empirical studies suggest that parents beliefs about their self-efficacy play an important role in how they engage with their children's schools. This supports a wealth of research that shows links between parental self-efficacy and parental involvement for children of all ages (Eccles & Harold, 1994; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992). Further, studies have shown both indirect and direct relations between parental self-efficacy and child performance in school (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001). This finding could help to extend scholarship and explore practical solutions on how to bolster parents feelings of their own agency. For instance, one component that was shown to be related was knowledge of

school structures. Creating programs or workshops that equip parents with the knowledge of how to navigate the school system may result in positive outcomes for parents and their children.

## Conclusion

Systemic racism impacts the schooling experiences of Black children and the interactions that the Black parents have with their children's schools (Chapman, 2013). CRT scholars point to the ways that racism, which is now more covert than in the past has led to race-evasive or colorblind discourses that further marginalize Black families (Kohli, Pizarro, & Nevárez, 2017. With racism being less blatant, the ways in which Black parents make sense of the racist experiences they or their children encounter in schools is an important consideration. In order to move beyond conceptualizations of Black parent involvement that do not consider race, racism, and power dynamics, it is imperative to consider context, structural racism, and barriers that Black families have to navigate. Together these three papers advance a new theoretical understanding of Black parents' engagement with their children's schools, explores that conceptualization through parent interviews, and contributes to the measurement of Black parents' analysis of racial inequities and school engagement in an effort to understand and challenge racial inequities in schools.

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